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*Two Poems by Joseph O'Neill*

WHEN CARTHAGE WAS FALLING

Xanthippos of Lacedæmon stood in the market-place  
Watching the crowds.  
He had been through it before,  
Only then it was Hellas  
And the crowds were crying in Greek,  
Curses like stones rattling on a roof,  
And now it was this Punic whine  
As merchants ran with goods  
And cursed their leaders.  
Strange how the place made no difference  
Nor the hooked noses of the merchants  
Nor the leaders they blasphemed,  
Names that ended in -pal and -cal and -bal,  
That might have ended in -adés,-idés or òn  
For all their difference  
From the men who had sold Hellas to Rome  
For their furious hatreds.  
How Xanthippos hated them all,  
Xanthippos—the man without home or wife or child  
Since Rome had taken Lacedæmon.  
Now he would have to move on,  
But where?—Where could a man go, with Carthage  
falling,  
And Hellas gone and Asia ripe as a rotting fig-tree?  
Where could a man live free from the Roman shadow?  
Curse them! and curse them! and curse them again!  
Fellows with eyes shallow as flagstones;  
Boors who had made the shipman agree  
To replace Praxiteles.

"The Suffetes want you, Xanthippos."  
 He turned—"I—I have done nothing."  
 "Nothing? Hellas belongs to Rome—you to Hellas.  
 If we give back Rome's goods, perhaps—"  
 "Yes, Hannibal—you tried to give even him—  
 Did you fall softer?" He hitched his shoulder.  
 "Above ground earth is shrunk, no room. Below  
 No corpse has need to seek a further refuge."  
 His hand went to his mouth. "I have prepared."  
 They caught the hand—"Come—Come—not that."  
 "You come alive. They will be kinder."  
 "Kinder?" He laughed. "'Kinder'—you say,  
 'Kinder'!"

Through narrow streets they brought him to the place  
 Where Dagon, the Corn-God, stared at the waves  
 And Suffetes bowed to Manilius the Roman.

## TIMELESSNESS

At times I've wondered if the flow of time  
 Might not become more bearable if days,  
 Seasons and years, the names of centuries—  
 Those dykes and ditches from which death makes  
 ambush—

Were blotted out for us; if souls could move  
 In one smooth, glutinous, unwarning stream  
 Towards that unknown impossible of nothingness  
 That so affrights us. Then from the depths  
 Of my unconscious night came such a cry,  
 Such wails of terror of that timeless sea  
 That clocks on walls, the tawdry calendars  
 Of New-Year days, the clamorous bells  
 Calling to prayer became dear buoys,  
 Sweet sacred buoys to which the frantic mind  
 Clung in its panic, wailing pitifully,  
 A lost child crying for its darling rhythms,  
 Framework of all its soul had ever known,  
 Without which life's whole meaning must dissolve  
 In one insane confusion.



# THE WILD GEESE THINK OF IRELAND

*By Hugh Montgomery*

Perhaps

because the sentimental rooks flap home  
at mellow evening when the limehued light  
falling behind the houses silhouettes  
thickfingered chimneypots and draws a graph  
with the roofline of the street (thus conjuring  
a memory where none was, establishing  
a sharp regret for something never known)

Or

because we are of Ireland and she has  
the power to etch her image on our minds  
this has persuaded us (sophisticates)  
that we long much, are homesick emigrants

Still

who see a glimpse of Irish towns in this  
vermeer-like scene ; by like or unlike who  
are filled with thoughts of her so that we need  
the dirty rags of clouds that fill her sky  
like a backyard ; and loathe unreasonably  
the fields of corn yellow as saxon hair.

Though what

it is (when the land-rail creaks like a door  
neither open nor shut) that takes the throat  
we guess, what the paper leaves of aspens  
whisper, or why some urge is on us, yet

We know

the greed of Houlihan's daughter for her sons  
(if by repute alone) and wonder on.

*Two Poems by T. H. Jones*

## DIFFERENCE

Under God's violent unsleeping eye  
 My fathers laboured for three hundred years  
 On the same farm, in the expected legend.  
 Their hymns were anodynes against defeat,  
 But sin, the original and withering worm,  
 Was always with them, whether they excelled  
 In prayers, made songs on winter nights,  
 Or slobbered in temptation, women, drink.

I inherit their long arms and mountain face,  
 The withering worm sleeps too within my blood,  
 But I know loneliness, unwatched by God.

## AMENDS

*(for Aueirin Talfan Davies)*

There were no gods among that bitten grass,  
 Those rocky challenges, those wind-torn trees,  
 Only the presence of the ancient thunderer  
 Cloudy with terror of his images.

Buzzard and carrion-crow controlled the air,  
 The weasel slinked bloodthirsty through the woods;  
 The fox and badger plundered and ran free  
 Where the grey winds made howling solitudes.

In that harsh landscape dreams were unconfined,  
 Dreams of hot sunlight and of older gods.  
 The coloured birds were singing in my head  
 When I set out to find the city roads.

Years after, in a thronged and barren parish,  
 I make old pictures of blackthorn and of pine,  
 The weasel and the crow, the mountain wastes,  
 And recall the only god that was ever mine.

*Two Poems by Hugh Connell*

“ESCAPE LIES AT THE VERY HEART OF  
WHAT YOU FEAR”

What do I fear? The ghosts of things undone,  
Of thanks unrendered, promises forgotten,  
Beauty and Love left unprotected, slighted.  
A gang of maimed defectives bars my way,  
And thick behind them grows the briar-brake  
Of stinging tearing throttling miseries  
That rings the Sleeping Beauty, Peace of Mind.  
If I could reach her, she would lead me out  
Where limpid floods mirror unhaunted skies,  
Innocent inexhaustible vistas ringing them.  
Since that's plumb out of my capacity,  
I plug my ears, wear goggles pink and black,  
And so exist, not too uncomfortably.

ACKNOWLEDGED WITH THANKS

In March when the black wind had us tormented,  
And firing was what everyone looked for,  
I set the tooth of my saw to a stem of beech  
For the good both of myself and my famished neighbour.

We had barely grazed the bark with a mark for guidance  
When a hiccup overhead brought me remembrance  
Of the cranes building nearby, and I said to the lad  
With all our racket and battering they might make quittance.

So we upped the sledge and wedges, axe and crosscut,  
A rood away we felled a fair enough substitute.  
The cranes' brood was reared and flown before I took heed,  
Being held to the work all summer like a wheel to the rut.

Till all being secure, I went cutting briars  
Michaelmas Eve, through young palms set in the grove there,  
The cranes were gone, but I seemingly found their gift—  
Like a lock of a thunder cloud, this grey-white feather.



# AN INTERPRETATION OF GRIMM'S FAIRY-TALES

*Arland Ussher and Carl von Metzradt.*

## III. THE BEAST'S HEAD ABOVE THE DOOR

RUSSIA—the German *Russland*—was in origin *Ross-land*, the land of horses ; and it might be said that whenever myth-making man looked to the lands of the East he saw the figure of a golden-maned oncoming steed, as when he looked towards the sun sinking in the Western seas he saw the image of the black sacrificial bull. Black horses and white bulls are also—perhaps more often—met with in the old tales ; but generally as something monstrous or excessive. The black horse is the nightmare-symbol of imprisoned force, while the day-dream image of the milk-white bull represents a placid and arrogant abundance ; in terms again of the compass, they are the Northern night and the Southern noonday. The visionary and quintessential reconciliation of the opposites is the chaste unicorn—the white horse of the single horn, the divine hybrid of Christian iconography. The Old Testament and the Homeric literature stand as clearly under the sign of the Horse, as do the New Testament and the late Classicism of the Mysteries under that of St. Luke's Bull (or Mithra's) ; the Titans or " Giants before the Flood " were begotten of gods who had, as the apocryphal Book of Enoch tells us, " the members of horses." Only when we reach the Apocalypse does the Horse—though as a bearer of destruction—again come into his own ; for in the Gospel he had dwindled to the Ass. In that final Vision of Judgment, as in the recent Judgment of the Nations, the primitive and pagan things return and rampage like Chirico horses—this time as explosive subconscious or " surrealistic " phenomena, horses of Pluto rather than Apollo. The Horse and the Cow are indeed the earliest types of the roving or centrifugal and the digestive or earthbound principles in Man—of the procreative and the transforming, the fiery and the watery. The Daemon Horse is our morning out-going and the Sacred Cow is our evening in-take ; the men of war came out of the belly of the Trojan Horse, as the participants in the love-feasts felt themselves to be re-born through the death of the Bull. From the pale dawn of history,



the horse and man—in his active aspect—have been welded together like a single centaur ; the horse was, as it were, man's extension into the physical world. It is no accident that the rationalistic era has coincided with the obsolescence of horseback-travel—man felt himself diminished in the lust of the eye and the pride of life ; Jonathan Swift, in the grotesque and still-fabulous beginnings of that era, saw man and horse for the first time sundered—man as re-assimilated to the creeping ape, the horse as elevated to the strange lost Valhalla of the Houyhnhnms. But the bitter and despairing allegory of Swift is narrated with greater understanding and pity in the child's fable of the Goose-girl and the Talking Horse. There a princess starts on a journey to her betrothed, taking with her the human and the animal servant—the chambermaid and the horse ; as man sets out on his life-journey borne like a rider upon his sensual body and handmaided by reason. And it is the Chambermaid who forces the Princess to dismount—refusing the life-giving office of bringing water to her from a stream—and who then proceeds to filch the steed, substituting for it her own inferior animal ; exactly as the development of reason in youth spirits away the illuminated senses of childhood, giving dulled and tarnished ones in exchange. The Princess, like our first parent, is "tempted"—or rather constrained ; for the Servant would not bring the cup of water any more than the Serpent could himself carry the Fruit of Eden—Man is betrayed, not by the life-giving knowledge, but by his growing reason which cannot yet handle the knowledge, so that he must perforce possess himself of it clumsily. And, to point the meaning still further, the Princess as she bends over the stream loses a keepsake of her mother's—a handkerchief streaked with the family-pattern of three blood-drops—representing that *Intuition* of her *Ancestry*, two words for which the German has the single, more beautiful one *Ahnen* ; whereupon she loses all power of foresight against the wiles of the Servant. Their destination reached, the traitorous Servant marries the King, while the rightful Princess is degraded to the station of Goose-girl : is not every fairy-tale the story of some Egyptian captivity of the future swan among the geese, some sojourn of the prodigal-lover among the swine—the stage of experiment and illusion, when all geese seem to be swans and even pigs can make believe their grovelling is flying ? The loyal Horse, feared by the usurping Handmaid, is decapitated, and the head fastened above a dark

archway through which the Goose-girl drives her geese ; but the severed head still speaks to the ex-Princess, as the Horse speaks of the Other World to Orpheus in M. Cocteau's fantasy, and reminds her of the glory she has known and the palace whence she came. It is thus that Man the rationaliser sought to tame and exploit the brute magic of Nature—attaching it as a lucky “ mascot ” to the car of his mechanist civilisation ; but it continued to speak to his subterranean volitional self with all the voices of the combustible minerals—the ominous centre-piece of *Power* in that rounded arch of the rational outlook through which the citizen-geese are driven. The true Princess has been tyrannically sworn to silence by the Servant, but (somewhat to abridge a long story) news of the talking beast-head naturally reaches the King, and the great reversal celebrated by the *Magnificat* is accomplished ; not, be it noted, from the mere humanitarian joy in reversals, but because names and forms cannot remain permanently in disaccord with underlying truth. In our psychological terms, the outgrown rationality is overturned in the end by fuller sensual and intuitive knowledge—the knowledge which stirs first in the brute blood ; failing that, every rational concept becomes a Cross to which the flesh is pinned—a blind circle of torment. This is symbolised in the story by the cask studded with nails in which the treacherous handmaid is rolled through the streets—an ending which (like Dante's Hell) reminds us that poetic justice can jar on an adult moral sense, and still be inspired truth and poetry. And this doom is pronounced unwittingly by the unfortunate on herself, because reason unassisted by intuition cannot foretell the future or see the total connexions of things. One would have thought that the Horse would have been a partaker in this Happy Ending—that its bones and hide would have been recovered from the knacker and re-united to the head—and so a modern sentimental children's-romancer would have had it ; but, as if to suggest that it was in some way darkly involved in the Princess's misadventures, no more is heard of the creature in the old tale—its head, we presume, remains over the gate. The Horse is Life, which—like Moses, or Dante's Vergil—can conduct to the Promised Land, but cannot breathe in that stillness or be thought of apart from the dangers of the journey ; Heaven or Utopia, in fact, is a suspense between breaths—a state of momentary Seeing, never of continuous Being. Of Man's two servants, the Body and not the Brain is the Penitent Thief—



but still a thief ; Life is the steed with the devil's hoof which, while we attempt to ride it, partly as it were rides us—it is Time, between whose hoof-beats we remember and possess in broken fragments our true and only kingdom, the lost kingdom of Nothingness. Man does not really look forward to an "ever-receding Ideal," like an Eden-apple held before a horse's nuzzle—that fantasy of the "progressive" era has proved to be an infernal cask of nails in which man is rolled. His deepest instinct bids him look forward only that he may—with gathered-up and rounded-off experience—one day look back, and say of his whole terrible past (in Nietzsche's phrase) "Thus would I have it." Then—desire and will outgrown—he can, departing, hang *that* fairy-tale also, like a horse's head, over the gateway ; it is not only a *Magnificat*, it is a *Nunc Dimittis*. Life—Sphinx or Steed—can no longer slay him ; *he* will have slain *Life* by listening to the beast-voice, and divining the meaning of its riddle.

## BIRD-SONG AND THE DAWN-CHORUS

By *Anthony Rye*

**G**OLDFINCHES that sip the air as they fly ; linnets, green and brown, and yellowhammers, that with long thrills sweeten the dust of the hedgerow they disturb with their whirring wings ; the turtle-dove like a pulse rippling with a slight nervous jar in the veins of summer : to all these and to so many others we owe much. And though it would seem that the ring-dove is in debt to us for his notorious deprecations, he pays us out of his song, we feel (those of us who are not farmers), more than ever was owing.

That familiar cooing is a blue sound, like the wood-smoke rising against the tall beeches, through the light cool spaces where the bird sits bowing, swelling and contracting the white ring about the throat for which we name him. He has, too, his secondary song, or call, pleasing though persistent, those blunt soft shouts as of suppressed glee, brief and lulling, though by no means languid, as if to match the sultry hour we usually hear it in. The



phrase of two notes merely—‘ *Coo-woop ! coo-woop* ’ (like a north-countryman’s ‘ *Coom oop !* ’ to his horse) has a lilt and rises a little at each repetition, in the last note of each phrase, being an endless tender question.

Most of us are aware of the extent to which we are indebted to bird-song in our joy of country living. We can hardly over-estimate the value of it, and may think, perhaps, that it would be a lesser evil to be deprived even of sight than of hearing these songs with their heavenly intimations. Paramount with us as the sense of sight is, it is bird-song which strikes us more forcibly on returning to the country even than grass and flower and tree. Birds singing in the valleys, answering from wood to wood, bring the utmost virtue of the change home to us—the cool sun-striped, shadowed and varied space of it. In bird-populous cottage gardens we are never less alone. The weight of our difference is lifted, and the loneliness of spirit which is so great a danger, to which paradoxically life in the cities most exposes us, is taken away before we are quite constricted by the Hydra or deafened out of all hope of gladness. Bird-starved, the Londoners relish the starlings that come to the city to roost (as do the Dubliners their pied-wagtails), craning up to see with a delight they could not perhaps define the hosts wheeling in the softly dazzling lamp-light, their masses black against the indigo sky, the towers and tall grey porticos. They hear with a joy rushing equal that soft thunder of wings, that wild music, sweet and shrill. For it is the only thing they have which projects them instantly into the fierce and ancient world of space and mystery.

Much of the enjoyment of bird-song may proceed from its kinship with our own deepest emotions ; yet the kinship is in most cases almost certainly fictitious. Something of the exultation we can share, and may be said to have imitated, to have made instruments to evoke, a similar beauty and interpret similar sensations ; instruments which often transcend the performance, speaking of tone-quality alone, of the choicest bird-vocalists. But the purest treble who for beauty of round tone and clearness can match them, has not their quality of unearthliness, which seems to come to us from an earlier world, strange, infinitely simple and far-away. That is a part, with the round bright “ mindless ” eye, the smooth light shape, the winged restless movement, of

what is alien to us for ever. The sounds, too, which are sorrowful, or seem so—those falling notes of the nightingale, the bullfinch's plaintive little pipe, and the plaintive but as if timidly questioning notes which form part of the utterance, on occasion, of the goldfinch—this sadness we may be certain is not ours, though we are apt to think it so, and the thought is somehow pleasing. But the bright sequences, repetitions of the same little artless phrase, which the tits, and the Great Tit especially, hammer out as if they were tiny blacksmiths—at it, hammer-and-anvil, all day—the ringing 'Teacher-teacher-teacher' (which poor Jeffries betrayed himself, in his dying state, into translating as 'Teejum—teejum,' *i.e.*, 'tedium') is obviously the expression of a joy in Spring to be shared by all things living, and is, moreover, common in degree to all birds. To Jefferies that signal of the joy he could once so greatly appreciate but now was to be denied was an irritant, a flaunted insult. There is one bird at least with whose spirit in performance we can feel close, and with reason. The blackbird, most conscious artist, actually practices his song for the coming season in those mild intervals of winter when the roots of his feathers are stirred, and the time till April and open avowal, till May and completed expression, seems less long to him. Sitting hidden and low on some bough of shrub, he will turn and return, in a soft ghostly whistle, diminished, muted—as if artist-like reluctant to be overheard—a phrase, a combination of few notes, something picked up and attached unconsciously in the last year's full tide of melody, which it is purposed to develop here in secrecy to form the new theme.

While the song-thrush takes advantage of such lulls to pour out its notes uninhibited, giving thus a queer foretaste of the very spring, the blackbird is the last to recommence as he is the earliest to fall out at the close of the summer. "Cold February knows thee well," says Tennyson, but it must have been rather in the comparative absence of cold in some sheltered garden of the sheltered Isle of Wight that a blackbird gave him so early an example of its spring song.

No other bird, as far as I am aware, so practices. The nightingale is the other great artist among our birds; for power and sheer virtuosity, and perhaps for human-seeming expression too, it is supreme. Nothing can surpass the skill—whether that be the result of a miraculous spontaneity or of some occult kind of

deliberation on the part of the bird in its long periods of silence elsewhere—with which it organises that mass of notes and patterns them so fitly. Mark the long pauses and the consummate artistry with which, conserving, ekeing even out of its plenty, it uses the very silence—the negation of song—and builds it as it were into the long ordered integrated whole for a foil to set off the brilliance of a passage ; for the drama of suspense ; for the enhancing of passion or pathos. The tone is immense in proportion to its size, for it may pass for quite a little bird, being not much larger than its relation the redbreast. And the sounds are of a quality so rich that only the blackbird can match them. But it cannot match the great length of the song, nor the astonishing production, the manipulation of tones up and down a range unequalled ; the long droopings and inflexions which give an uncanny effect of pathos, and the rapid jets, the “ fast thick pants ”—those extraordinary sounds which the ancients transcribed “ Jug-jug-jug ” an effect, I surmise, of which we catch the mechanical part only,—some beauty beyond our range being withheld through the limitations of our hearing.

The nightingale can do all this. No wonder that it is widely esteemed the prince of songbirds. Nevertheless, as far as we know, it never practises as the blackbird does. It springs its song splendid, entire among the furze-clots and brambles and flower-dangled hazels, seeming suddenly to appear out of nothing ; or out of the blind waste of its hazard that existed in our minds before this advent. Its song is a miracle, but we love the other's better, not only for its beauty but for the human pain of its achievement.

It seems as if there is almost no bird-song, at least in the tempered wildness of pastoral surroundings, which is unpleasing. The harsh screaming of swifts—song marvellously attuned to flight ; the grating metallic cries of rooks ; even the cold gruff sawing of carrion-crows as they bow to mates distant on other naked elm-tops in the spring sunlight ; all are in themselves beautiful. This last sound is touchingly mellowed in the season, having a metallised inward ring to it. The frantic, foolish clatter of magpies, especially when accompanying their broods, is unparalleled loquacity, audacious, laughable, for which some may forgive these scoundrelly birds their rapacity, shared by the jay. And the jay, gaudy and free, imitates Doll Tear-Sheet in its sudden



alarm ; a cry we hold abnoxious possibly because it disturbs so violently, as it is meant to do, our quiet stroll in the woods, which to the jay is purposed with evil. But of all voices of the crow tribe I love best that parlance Jackdaws hold aloft in still summer noons in tall grave beech-woods, when the trees' top boughs only are shot with gleams, and all beneath is a peaceful gloom, a twilight of green airy spaces. It is the sound, curiously inappropriate, of the quiet clicking of billiard balls in cannon together—a ludicrous association which sends the mind spinning off instantly to the cool, else-silent sylvan reality.

Water-birds' voices have a fascination of their own. No call breaks so refreshingly as the moorhen's over quiet pools, on lily-padded lakes ; a long and sharp yet fluent breaking, followed usually by the bird's flapping strokes, its brush and scatter over the surface, when the eye sees the arrow of silver grooved, the feathery wavelets, the diamonds dropping from the trailed legs. The high long-drawn ' peet ' of the kingfisher, a bolt of blue fire, is as startling as that blue is to the eye, and yet it is tempered in the mind by the low tones of shadowed water or a depth of foliage behind. And on the banks of swift small rivers the twittering of sedge-warblers imitates the current whorled with eddies and flawed with undulations ; the threads, like coils of fine hair, that twine back on themselves against the main flow, towards the sides ; the gleaming articulation of petty waves, and their froth and bubble against sand-spits, snags, fallen branches burying in the flood ; something of the chuckling and whispering in the reeds.

Ceaselessly, round cottages that have their proper wealth of shaggy eaves, creepers and ivy, there is a coming and going of small companionable birds. While only suiting themselves in nesting-time or winter to the protection afforded, they seem also to echo wonderfully, with their songs and exclamations, our own moods adapted to the year's changes. We are happy to share the wren's burst of exuberance on a spring morning, to answer the nervous question in the yellow-wagtail's not very desperate alarm-note by observing it, on the outflung branch of creeper, out of the tail of the eye with averted head, with remarks made *sotto voce* concerning its delightful imminence and the progress of the nest just beyond the window—tones deferential in proportion to the confidence the bird has shown in us by building there.

The time will come too soon when most of the avian neighbours will fall silent, not a note to be wooed out of them though the brightest summer day protests the remoteness of autumn's leaden heats and hours of heavy gold. First there will come, to a whirr of wings quickened to the need, those fussy squawkings, sounds, as it were, liquid to pulpiness—unpleasantly like squelchings, and purposely meant to aggravate into attention—of the full-fledged but as yet groundling young, helpless and insatiable. And if starlings have found a cranny in the building there will be a clamour of light screamings from nestlings' throats if so much as a shadow flits across their entrance hole. When the last broods have been reared, and each year's little tragedies have been enacted in the undergrowth, the shrill short testimonies all ended and the survivors flown, then the only voices will be the sudden flirt of wings on the silence of high-summer hours, the rustling and scrabbling of blackbirds in last year's dead leaves or leaves prematurely fallen, or a thrush rapping a snail against a stone. Or there may come the occasional rare twittering of finch-flocks in the orchard, returned, for a change of diet maybe, out of open cornfields. Or that sound most evocative of late-summer heat, the single repeated questioning alarm-note (if such it be) of some blackbird sheltering from the sun among large-leaved garden plants; in half-moult, dejected, shabby, pecking in a desultory way here and there, as if sated with the season's plenty.

They are seen now, the birds, only as shadowy forms slipping from shade to shade. They shuffle or sit with folded wings, narrowed, shut in, recessed with the narrowing year. The time of wild flight, bursting song, arrowy busy-ness is long past with them, and passing for us, too, who receive the cosmic changes and turn to harvest and winter's room shut away, and books, and firelight fantasy. They never shared our lives, neighboured us so closely as now, as if they, too, were aware how soon in the chill threadbare the redbreast's tune will show again, solitary, like a silver fibre. But we shall then remember better the hour they had, and of how intense, how magical a splendour it was; a moment to rock the young who are one with it, and pierce the dullness of the most oblivious, the most mundane.

It was in spring, that hour—spring that is constant, and to which, as winter continues, we wheel closer and ever closer with every lengthening day.

The songs of birds are the most spiritual sounds we hear. This is true, at least, of certain kinds ; among them, fortunately, the commonest.

For the flutings of the various thrushes, the chiming of tits, the bright scatter or delicate cascade of whitethroats and willow-warblers, and that effect as of a gleaming embroidered tissue which the combined notes of flocks of finches make, and other small birds whose songs individually may be slight, all these, though lovely, are a part of common experience. Even the nightingale's marvellous effusion of notes is not rare, though of course local.

The commonest of these songs, the most meagre of piping notes, taken separately or linked in intricately devised passage, low or rich in volume, have something of Ariel's quality. They come like flows or drops of water—like water itself ; or like motes of shining air in the blue sky and the patterns the sun makes through leaves, or coloured flower-petals of softly gleaming surface. They take their place with these in being the grace-notes of creation : things which, in childhood especially, leaven and sweeten consciousness. No one hearing the dawn chorus of birds for the first time can ever afterwards be quite the same person. Things will not *seem* the same to him. And though future experience may deaden the sense, there are few, happily, who cannot recover—if only for a moment in memory, or by a laborious act of intellect—something of the clear message and the significance of it.

In what fortunate circumstances was I to hear first in boyhood this miracle—for miracle it is. The long blank trudge, in darkness of shrouded starless skies, on the hard roadway ; the cold, the weariness, the taunting of unseen miles ; the fear, notwithstanding friendly companionship, of the unaccustomed, threatening silence, the huge dark vitality of this night, which shrunk our own to a taper ; and at last—as we sat exhausted under a wayside tree in the breaking light and dozed, and so lost the wavering first notes of the prelude—the bursting of the full wave over our amazed heads in a chorus of triumph, of ecstasy, of praise, whose nature and direction *then*—strung to it as we were even by the little trivial ordeal we had just passed through—there was never a moment of question !



Even if we know that sex-strife, competitive belligerency in the establishing of nesting-territory, are the chief causes behind the passion of singing, this essential, this spirituality is not disturbed. The bird, with colour and winged gesture and song, is bent wholly to what it serves. The earth-rooted causes together with their effects are themselves in harmony with, as they are a part of, all. It would be churlish, at least, to assert that this overt act of worship is different in kind from another—even from a manifestation so outwardly removed as the motionless, silent devotion of an ascetic, which is perhaps due to the same causes, but inverted.

Such a fortunate introduction as that recounted cannot happen to most of us, one supposes, in our urbanised vocations. But howsoever it is heard, this happy wild free rhapsody, the impression is much the same. That even crowded experience cannot much or effectually dim it, the ear affording to be unwary here in seeking its repetition, a recent and more detailed example, given, as typical of all, may show. It was in late April—the propitious time. The moon, shining all night with a clear soft light out of an open sky, made a tempered brilliance, a kind of demi-day. On waking one did not at first know whether it was still night, but the blind pallor as of a mirror breathed on, the chill, a kind of emptiness and the absence of that earlier wash of warm silver, all told of the approach of morning. At this season of the year, the birds could be relied upon to begin as early as three or three-thirty. They were silent now, but that rapid process of lightening had already begun, when it is as if a shudder passes through the air, the very earth itself, and at each shudder or tremor-lift objects are brought a little nearer, made a little more opaque, their details more visible. A cool wind rose out of nowhere, the skies whitened though there was still no hint of the sun.

Often it is the lark in open hilly localities that preludes the dawn chorus—the lark that for all the tenuous brightness, the delicious frailness of its song in the thin blue of the heavens, is sturdy, stoic for the grim as well, the grey at least of breaking darkness. I have seen it on a day of south-west gales, mounting into the wind and rain against which one would think its brief wings could scarcely make headway, and throwing all the while its own small storm of song, as clear, as bright as ever it reeled into calm sunlit upper air. But here, in a sheltered spot of trees and garden, there came, not this torrent, but the edging of a

mere sliver of sound—the redbreast's ; and it seemed fitting that this little bird, this loyalist whose notes so often had shown like bright threads in the dark fabric of winter, should lead the other birds in the high mead of their existence. The notes came abruptly, thin but clear ; an utterance almost casual, like a remark tactfully reopening a conversation after a lull—too casual, indeed, after such bitter brooding recession as this of winter had been. The introduction was brief. Upon it fell the little pleasing scatter of a warbler's notes, crazily haphazard and inconsequential to that bowing of fine-drawn harmonics. And before the ear could quite assimilate these, recognise and add them as a compliment, there, with the blaze, almost, of its richer sound, yet flute-like, round and full, came the blackbird's song.

This was not the leisurely song, opulent, golden, slow—the replete song of the blackbird later in the day and in the year, when it seems in high discussion of joy, in the exaltation and freedom unhurried of its perfect powers. The ecstasy of the occasion was too much even for this artist among birds. The great notes came out flooding, forced in firm jets, or like bright blades of sound ; and the joy made the bird catch sometimes, trip in its figures and force a splutter, a grotesque guttural. In this, and at this time only, it approaches the manner of the song-thrush, whose runs and shakes and roulades, repetitions of ecstatic phrases, choke the theme, making a music not unmixed with a certain fuss and confusion distressing, for all its beauty, to the mind as to the ear. Yet the thrush, too, has its moment, when the closing of a summer evening throws long shadows and lances of gold on the short sward, and in the coolness of skies quenched of fire the song has a gentler lustre, as if toned by the grace of evening.

Where a blackbird sings there will always be others. Song is answered by song in the far or middle distance. It seems also that either blackbird or thrush must have the dominance in a locality, and that one kind or the other will be subdued accordingly. Here the blackbirds were in strength, and as in full rush and crescendo of notes the whole concourse gathered to a climax, the song-thrush among them, the beauty even of this was eclipsed. And as for the missel-thrush—the great thrush—the desultory humble few of its notes (which, however, in strength and clear purity approach the blackbird's more nearly than the song-thrush's), a song so touchingly humble in view of the bird's large size and courage—the missel-thrush to whom rough weather gives confidence to pipe its best as it clings to some wind-rocked bough

at the extremity of a leafless tree-top—here, in the glorious assembly, in the calm dawn, it added its mite with shy courage only, if as honestly and doggedly as ever.

The chorus now had a shimmer, a broad bright texture of woven notes underlying. With closed eyes one could realise vividly the unseen straining throats, swelled almost painfully with effort, the fixed eyes, the convulsed little bodies as they pulsed and throbbed with energy, the thin claws gripping like wires, the tremored fluttering wings, the erected feathers of the crown. Every lesser bird as well as the soloists was at sublimest endeavour : tits, warblers, finches ; the wren of sudden attack in long bright volleys, surprising as an onrush of cavalry ; the hedgesparrow, shocked out of demureness, raising the light sweet chain that streams like bubbles upwards, like bubbles breaks and expires., And when all was at its height—and it had taken, it seemed, but a few moments—there came two things that were missing : the cuckoo, with its travelling voice, calling the twin notes, soft, clear and exultant, into the now fast-colouring sky ; notes with the unseizable interval between them, and so precious, so miraculous, so deceptively simple. Nearing, departing, it seemed free as Ariel, like Puck, earth-girdling, or rather a Mercury among birds bearing abroad his high message, reminding of a more spacious glory above and beyond this field, narrow and closed as it was, even though filled with the right, divine promise. Then, in perfect antithesis, there sounded the long hoot of an owl beating for the home tree, adrift like a part-shadow of night, no longer jubilant, with a ghostly hilarity, as on frosty nights under festive moon and star, but a little wistful, lonely, as if it felt its separation from these birds of the day and gave its long hoot tinged slightly with this sorrow, unwilling not to share, or afraid to be quite excluded by the act of silence.

As if this last had been a signal, an earnest that day had once more routed the night whose creature the owl had been, instantly appeared a slackening, very slight at first, in the tempo ; small flaws, as it were, of silence in the song's stream. The chorus dropped as swiftly as it had arisen, as apparently effortlessly and without seeming cause. Birds one by one fell out, or, if not lapsing into silence quite, dispersed to thickets on the verges of what had seemed an enchanted circle or pool of magical, concentrated power. There, in semi-secrecy of their shadowed haunts under the leaves, they carried on in petty degree their thrills and small sequences of notes ; individual songs from which something shining seemed now to have been taken from that which was limitless in the community of joyous praisers.



# MY AUNT SIBYLLA

*By Winifred Letts*

NOW, my dear, if you'll humour your old granduncle a little further, draw back the curtains and let the moon fight the firelight—they'll never agree, those two. Moon is for wild, cold magic and fire is for home and family.

There! that's it. Now when the moon shines through that Scots pine I'm a little boy again, a scared little boy, with the moon shining on my bed and Aunt Sibylla—but it's absurd. If you switched on the light I'd be your wise old granduncle, retired professor of chemistry, a dry-as-dust old bachelor.

Story? You'll be bored by my stories, besides, if you think I believe this one myself, you'll say I'm "nuts," "bats," "gaga," whatever is your modern word for lunacy. Lunacy—it's the best word really, power of the moon—she *has* power. Then, if you'll have it—I'll be a little boy again in a nice, sane London house, son of the sanest mother you could imagine, and a clever father who had just a little strain of Welsh romance in his Morgan descent—but it was quenched in the Civil Service.

I was an only child and rather sickly after jaundice and quinsy. I had early learnt to read and for lack of childish games read all the fairy tales and romances I could find. As a result I was full of fears and fancies and would not sleep without a nightlight. My dreams were bogey-ridden,—witches, ogres, malevolent dwarfs haunted them and I would wake shouting.

My mother, as I told you, was a woman of the soundest sense, so, one day when I had refused my dinner she sat down beside me and said :—

"Owen, you are going to the country. That is what you need. You'll get fresh air and good milk and butter and come back to Papa and me a rosy, jolly boy."

"Where shall I go, Mama?" said I.

"To Papa's aunt—your grand-aunt Sibylla Morgan."

The name Sibylla charmed my fancy for strange names.

"Is she lovely like her name?" I asked.

"Lovely? No, she was a handsome woman when I saw her at my wedding. She's a little bit odd from living so far off in the country. She and Uncle Evan live in the wilds of Wiltshire at Abbotsgarth, that's the family place, your father loved it when he was a child; he would like you to know it too."

My mother's plans were only announced when settled and the details carefully planned—I was to travel to Salisbury in charge of the guard, and Aunt Sibylla was to meet me there and we would drive the long distance to Abbotsgarth. My father brought me to Waterloo. He was an aloof and silent parent, and his only remark that I remember was : “ I hope you see Salisbury Cathedral, Owen. It has the loveliest spire in England ; one sees it suddenly over hill and dale like a finger pointing up to God.”

That phrase caught my fancy : “ A finger pointing up to God.” My father had nothing further to say except the Victorian precept to be a good boy.

“ You uncle Evan is old. I'd keep out of his way if I were you ; and be sure you do what Aunt Sibylla tells you. Goodbye, my boy.”

I was a tired and bewildered child when the guard came to my carriage and told me we had reached Salisbury. Behind him was a tall figure in black. I had a vague impression of flapping cloak and wide-brimmed hat, and a face with large dark eyes.

“ Are you my nephew, Owen Morgan ? ” asked a deep voice.

“ Yes, Aunt Sibylla.”

She laughed to the guard.

“ He has my name pat enough,” she said ; “ now call me a porter and have his bag brought to the barouche.”

I noticed that Aunt Sibylla spoke with a calm authority that seemed to expect Salisbury station to bow before her. I followed the black cloak and was led to an ancient-looking vehicle driven by a surly old man and drawn by two horses that were more used to farm work than carriages.

After a few remarks we fell into silence. In the musty-smelling barouche I had no taste for the Marie biscuits that Aunt Sibylla produced from a bag.

I was half asleep when she roused me with a sharp elbow.

“ Look, nephew, look—to your right—that is Stonehenge. You've heard of it.”

I woke up and saw what looked to me like a child's bricks set up in that immensity of plain.

“ Did the Druids build it ? ” I asked.

“ Probably an earlier people. But the Druids held their religious rites here. Can you not see them, robed in white, walking to the sacrificial stone ? ”

Her deep voice thrilled with excitement.

"Did they kill people?" I asked, suddenly filled with that welcome terror of childhood.

"Yes, yes, on that stone when the rising sun struck it with light."

"Wasn't that wicked, Aunt Sibylla?"

"No—no, silly boy. All religions have sacrificial victims. That is a part of the magic of the earth."

She said no more, and it was dark and I was asleep when the grumpy old coachman drew up his horses at the door of Abbots-garth. I stumbled into a dim hall where a maid's apron gleamed in the dusk.

"Take Master Owen up to bed, Esther," my aunt commanded, "and give him bread and milk."

The girl took my hand and I went with her upstairs to a candle-lit room. She made no effort to talk to me, and I was shy. She folded my clothes and tucked the coverlet round me. When she had brought me bread and milk I begged her to light my night-light and leave the door open.

"No, Master Owen; the cat would come in, he might smother you," she told me.

"But, Esther, I love cats, I'd like him to come."

"You won't like Grim, Master Owen; he's wicked, no one likes him but the mistress. He's not a right sort of cat."

"How do you mean 'not right,' Esther?" I asked her; but she had left the room and the door was shut.

The fatigue of the journey sent me to sleep at once, and I only woke to the rustle of a dress in the room. Aunt Sibylla was standing by the window, a long cloak round her, the moonlight shining on her face and her silver hair. She was a Nocturne in black and white. I lay silent, but she seemed conscious that I was awake.

"What do you want with a night-light, nephew?" she asked.

"I get frightened at night; Mama lets me have a night-light."

"So she wrote to me. And, pray, what could frighten you?"

I was silent with shame.

"Well?" she asked sharply.

"Witches," I murmured.

At that she laughed, a deep sort of chuckle.

"But no Morgan should be afraid of witches," she said, and she sat down upon my bed, her eyes on my face. "Don't you know we're descended from Owen Glendower and that he was a



great wizard? You should welcome witches, you should learn witchcraft. Why, isn't it splendid to ride out on the wind, to look into cottage windows, to go sailing over the Plain, to wake the old druids again and to learn their secrets?"

"Can witches do that?" I asked.

"Oh! witchcraft is a great art," she laughed, and I felt sure that she was just teasing me, playing on the earnestness of childhood.

"You can ask your Uncle Evan," she said; "he has studied magic in Africa, he writes books about it. Yes, he studied it in Fez, and he has learnt the tricks of witch-doctors in many tribes. You can ask him."

But, indeed, when I met Uncle Evan I had no thought of asking him anything. I met him first at breakfast; in his dark spectacles he looked like some old beetle, and he was so deaf that no question would have reached him. Meals were solemn affairs, for Aunt Sibylla was silent except for sudden directions to the young maid Esther, who seemed in terror, her hands shaking as she held the vegetable dishes beside us.

"Why, have you developed palsy?" my aunt asked her and laughed that queer chuckle of hers. Esther flushed, but made no reply; Aunt Sibylla's eyes were upon her. What strange eyes they were; they had been beautiful in her youth, great dark eyes, lustrous with life; now they had light rings round the dark iris.

"Why are you so frightened of Aunt Sibylla?" I asked Esther at my bed-time meeting with her.

"I don't know, Master Owen," and she looked nervously behind her.

"Why don't you go away if you're frightened?"

"It's my stepmother; she'd beat me and send me back—she said so."

"But Aunt Sibylla doesn't beat you? There's something queer—I want to know."

"Best say nothing, Master Owen; none of us does *say* anything . . . you're only young, you wouldn't know. Just always do as Mistress bids you. Never cross her."

I suppose I took that advice. I was more quiet and well-behaved than any boy should be, a sign that my health had not improved with the visit to Abbotsgarth. I wandered about all day, only joining my elders at meals. I found the gardener was no friend, a cross old man who hated small boys. I came upon

the gamekeeper in the woods, but his sacrificial tree with the corpses of weasels, hawks, jays and a squirrel disheartened me. I preferred my own company. Certainly I learned to love the place and to people it with the fantasies I drew from the old books I read—Grimm, Fouqué, Malory. I lived in a dream world and enjoyed even my fears, except at night when my one friend was the night-light.

A moon had waned and a new moon was only a silver finger-nail over the downs when a day brought change to my solitary life. A thunderstorm had been muttering and rolling over the Plain and a violent shower had sent me indoors to stand rather mournfully in the hall watching from the window the great purple clouds massing on the horizon. Suddenly Aunt Sibylla came upon me. She had come through a door I had never seen open.

"Nothing to do?" she asked, "then I'll give you a treat, a very special treat. You shall come to my Studio. Oh! don't think I ask many people there, only two or three who understand. Now . . . follow me."

She turned, and I followed her through the door that led to a dark oak staircase. It rose abruptly to another door which she opened with a key. The room was a Studio with the usual easel and a lot of canvases, face to the wall. The furniture was beautiful as far as a child remembers such things, and my eye noted an old mirror with an elaborate gilt frame. There was a new canvas on the easel, and palette, paints and brushes lay about, a tempting sight for a child. But what I noticed most, for I loved animals, was the cat which sat up in a chair staring at me. He was a rusty black and his tawny eyes squinted; his ears were the scarred ears of the war-like old Tom. He let me stroke him, and Aunt Sibylla smiled—

"He knows you for a true Morgan or he'd scratch," she told me; "he's a regular hell-cat."

While Aunt Sibylla washed her brushes I wandered about looking at the pictures. Young as I was, I knew that the pictures meant genius, the grotesque genius that inspired some medieval artists. Old Peter Breughel—do you know his pictures? You should. I can spend hours over Breughel pictures. He was the painter of the Underworld, that queer region between earth and hell where the human and the monstrous meet; he could people a picture with as many queer demoniac figures as you find race-goers in Frith's Derby Day. That same macabere genius was there

in Aunt Sibylla's work. Creatures half human, half reptile lurked in the shadows ; leering dwarfs stood at cottage doors, trees were mop-haired ogres with roots clutching little children and branches stretched to catch the stupid traveller on his way.

The pictures kept me spell-bound. Aunt Sibylla laughed at me.

"Now, who is afraid of witchcraft ?" she asked ; "isn't that a wonderful world—ours for the taking ? But you must be bold, you mustn't fear your own powers. Oh ! but you shall have a surprise ; shut your eyes till I tell you to look."

I did so obediently. No one ever disobeyed Aunt Sibylla.

"Look !" she commanded.

I opened my eyes and there was the witch of all the bogey-stories, witch in steeple hat with broomstick in hand, her sinister eyes on my face.

I screamed ; I rushed to the door. At that Aunt Sibylla's queer chuckle stopped me.

"You little donkey ! Come back. It's only a joke I played on you. I had the hat for a fancy dress ball. Of course I got the prize. There ! I've taken it off. Why ! how white you are—what would dear Mama say ? But stand there, just as you are. You're an inspiration, Owen. "The frightened boy" —there's a picture. If you can keep that look I'll make something the stupid Academy won't dare reject. Stand there . . . look at that mirror."

Aunt Sibylla was eager, she took up her charcoal. Still sick with fear, I looked towards the mirror with the gilt serpentine frame. I could see her reflected as she worked. But here was the horror, the reflection was a distorted face, sometimes long and pinched, sometimes shortened fantastically and the eyes squinting. I can tell myself now that it was a distorting mirror, a common device to make laughter. Then it was a part of the diabolic devices of the Studio.

My aunt was well satisfied, and when the gong sounded for lunch she sighed and said : "You're a good boy and a good subject ; you and I can be friends. We'll do wonderful things together."

I never asked her what things, but agreed meekly and followed her down the crooked stairs.

From that day she took notice of me and made me her companion. We drove out with the old white pony, up hill and down dale, with the fascination of Wiltshire growing upon me. Sometimes it was a little hill-top wood that we explored, again we drove



with the vast spaciousness of the Plain about us. And the waxing moon greeted me at night, shining in at my bedroom window, peering at me through the Scots pine—just as you see her do to-night.

Then there was a break in our quiet lives.

I heard from Esther that a visitor was expected. I met him at tea in the library, a foreigner I guessed from his sallow face and pointed black beard. He and Aunt Sibylla talked in a language that I thought might be French. Evidently they spoke of me sometimes, for he would look at me and smile. I felt important although I disliked the man and felt uneasy with him.

That night Aunt Sibylla said to me: "You shall sit up late for a treat to-night, Owen. Won't that be fun?"

I agreed, and took my bread and milk in the dining room while they had dinner. At dessert I was given a glass of port wine and biscuits. Aunt Sibylla was gay and sparkling as I had not yet seen her. She wore a necklace of emeralds in a filigree gold setting. The rapid French talk seemed to bemuse my childish brain. Uncle Evan sat silent and beetlelike at the table end.

Then Aunt Sibylla rose, took my hand, and led me to a room I had never seen. It was off the library, a close-curtained, musty room, smelling of old parchment and burnt-out candles. She put me into a big chair and told me to look at a light that flickered against a convex mirror set on a bookcase. I fell asleep at once and only woke with my aunt's hand shaking me. "You're asleep, boy! That's the port wine. Go upstairs and get into bed. I'll come up later."

I vaguely noticed the two men sitting at a round table in the middle of the room. Aunt Sibylla lighted another candle and gave it to me. I went up to bed, lay down and fell asleep in my clothes. But when morning came I was in my nightshirt and between the sheets, so someone had undressed me.

The next night was the full of the moon, and I went to bed as usual and fell asleep. I woke to see Aunt Sibylla, a silhouette of darkness against the window pane. She turned and bent over me. I wanted to scream but lay silent.

"Are you awake?" she asked.

"Yes," I said.

"Then put on your dressing-gown and come down. We want you."

Without question I obeyed her, and taking her hand we went to that room where I had already passed an hour. Now the cur-

tains were drawn, the windows open and moonlight made patterns with the shadows on the floor. Again I was told to look at the candle and its flickering reflections.

The sensations of a drug taker, of the patient under anaesthetics were, I suppose, what I felt that night. It was as though my waking self were wound up tighter, tighter till something must burst in my head. There was a fearful moment when body and spirit seemed to part company. Then I was free, gloriously free. I was floating towards the ceiling, I was following Aunt Sibylla, I had her by the hand. The Frenchman, too, was with us and behind us Uncle Evan. Out into the moonlight, then up, up we flew. The woods were blotted darkness on the white hill-sides. The stubble fields were golden in the light. Here and there a white cottage showed an orange glow, someone was awake there. Could someone see us? There was the Church tower of the village, squat and solid and the comfortable Rectory near it. How we soared and then swooped down towards earth! I saw the cattle in the fields and a white cat shining as it prowled by a hedgerow.

Then, far from cottage or manor, we circled over the infinite loneliness of the Plain and presently saw Stonehenge beneath us.

"They will welcome us," cried Aunt Sibylla; "we bring the sacrifice."

Looking down, I saw figures grouped about the stones. Their faces were raised to us.

"Up again and three times widdergins around the circle," she screamed against the wind that beat upon us.

So we rose up and up until I could see far, far off the spire of Salisbury, the finger pointing up to God.

"Save me, God!" I shouted, and fell down, down, down . . . Then I was sobbing and shivering in the old leather chair and Aunt Sibylla was standing over me with the moonlight in her hair.

"You stupid child," she scolded, "stop that foolish noise—you've had a nightmare."

"I fell," I stammered, "I fell out of the sky—right down on to Stonehenge."

"You had a falling dream," she said; "that's quite usual and the rest was nightmare. You walked in your sleep, and we put you in the chair till you'd wake. Come, I'll bring you back to bed."

The two men were standing by an open window, their faces white and sinister in the light.

Aunt Sibylla led me back to bed, but I stayed awake shivering until my temperature rose and I tossed with fever. I must have been ill for several days, for I woke from restless sleep to see my mother's placid form at my side. Never had her face been more welcome. I wept with joy against her much-buttoned bosom.

"There, there," she soothed me, "you'll be well enough to travel soon, and we'll go to the seaside—some cheerful place like Ramsgate."

I saw nothing of Aunt Sibylla in the next days, and she bid me a cold goodbye. It was not until we reached the commonplace safety of the train that I ventured on discussion. My mother and I were alone in the compartment.

"Is Aunt Sibylla cross with me?" I asked.

"No—oh! not cross. She found you a little difficult and mopey and very fanciful. Old ladies can't understand children. You needed magnesia when you had those nightmares."

"And didn't we really fly out of the window, and didn't I bump down from the sky?"

My mother laughed till the roses in her bonnet shook.

"Fly, you silly boy? No one will ever fly. It was nightmare."

"And Aunt Sibylla—don't you think?"

I stopped, unable to say the word in this sane railway carriage.

"Go on, Owen, tell mother what *you* think?"

"Do you think she's really a . . . a"

"A what? . . . say it"

"A witch."

My mother laughed again.

"No, of course not, Owen. She's a little eccentric and fanciful. But, really, dear, as Papa says, it's time you went to school. But don't talk about witches or the boys will tease you for a baby."

So that ends my memory of Aunt Sibylla. School and a love for science made me forget her.

What happened to her . . . eh? Poor soul, she ended sadly. Her studio caught fire somehow, upset the turpentine, I expect, but she and her cat and her pictures all were burnt up together. Only a thunderstorm and the heavy rain saved the house. Abbots-garth? Oh! it was sold to a wealthy publican.

So I'm the only person left to believe that my Aunt Sibylla was a genius and a — — but, of course, I *don't* believe that . . . Draw the curtains and shut out that mocking moon.



# WORK IN PROGRESS

## AN APOLOGY FOR PLAYERS

*By Maurice Kennedy*

*" Well !—we'll meet in the Green Room "*

*(The Critic—R. B. Sheridan)*

**F**EW things are more irresistible to humanity than the sight of men working, particularly if the work be in any way unfamiliar. A gaping hole in the street, the sound of pneumatic drills from the nether regions, is enough to attract a crowd of interested bystanders at any hour of the day. To the average citizen, it seems strange that certain men should be at liberty to uproot the pavement apparently at their own sweet whim. He feels there must be some hidden purpose behind these mysterious activities: perhaps if he watches long enough this valuable information will come to him in a flash of sudden comprehension, with vistas of untold delight. In the days of gas lamps, the lamplighter may have regarded his job as dull routine, but to the group of small boys who followed him around the dusky avenues he had all the appearance of a man set apart. John D. Sheridan has recently been discoursing humourously on the fascination which the proceedings of plumbers, mechanics and other skilled artificers hold for the unversed onlooker. The other man's job is usually incomprehensible.

Especially is this the case with the theatre, which is a world all its own, a world which comes to life, like the bat, with the approach of darkness, a world which does its daily work during the leisure hours of other men. There is a general, intense curiosity about these strange theatrical persons and their work, their attitude to life, and the devious methods by which they produce the final result, the acted play. There exists the added attraction that these methods bear little relation to what the average man is accustomed to call "work," a fact from which the average man derives much amusement. "Playacting," in the colloquial sense, has acquired a somewhat derogatory sound; and it is a curious thought that members of a profession which can count numerous Dames and knights among its more famous exponents, may still—as happened to the Abbey Players in America—be clapped into jail as vagabonds within the meaning of the Act.

Playwrights, busily engaged in holding the mirror up to nature, have always been aware of this interest in the "mechanics" of the theatre, and have made use of it for centuries—the earliest device being the play within a play. Whether this stratagem antedates Shakespeare or not, I have no idea. Shakespeare used it three times—once in strict furtherance of the demands of his plot, and twice as an addition to the general entertainment. The prologue, in "The Taming of the Shrew," where the entire play is supposed to be devised to illustrate one of Timothy Sly's anecdotes, seems to have fallen out of favour with modern producers, who are inclined to skip the introduction and present the part as the whole. The extraordinary playlet presented by Bottom the Weaver and his companions in "A Midsummer Night's Dream" forms a sub-plot of its own. But in "Hamlet"—whether you regard "The Mousetrap" as a genuine seeking after the truth on Hamlet's part, or merely as another expedient for postponing the action which he has known from the start that he must take—it remains an essential part of the plot. "The Mousetrap" itself has given rise to the most mangled quotation from that play—full of quotations—"the play's the thing"; and it may be noted that the same "Mousetrap" appears again under a slight disguise in "Show Boat"; but perhaps the episode in that remarkable musical comedy might be more accurately described as a play *around* a play.

Beaumont and Fletcher, contemporaries of Shakespeare, carried the process further in "The Knight of the Burning Pestle"—mainly a burlesque of "Don Quixote," but in an unusual form. The "Induction" is:—"Several Gentlemen sitting on Stools on the Stage. The Citizen, his Wife, and Ralph sitting below among the Audience. Enter the Speaker of the Prologue." The Speaker is interrupted in his high-flown oratory by the indignant Citizen, on the grounds that "these seven years there hath been plays at this house, you still have girds at citizens"; he demands "something notably in honour of the commons of the city." In an illuminating comment on the speed at which repertory playwrights worked in those days, the Speaker remonstrates: "Oh, you should have told us your mind a month since." The Citizen, however, remains adamant: "I will have a grocer, and he shall do admirable things." And so the apprentice Ralph is inserted into the play as a chivalrous knight, and goes his irrelevant way through the plot to the loudly expressed delight of the Citizen's

wife, and dies at the end with a remarkable speech of some eighty lines. The play finishes as amusingly as it began, with a speech to the audience by the Citizen and his grateful Wife.

It is entirely probable that there is nothing new under the sun. When the Expressionists experimented with placing actors among the audience (as Odets did in "Waiting for Lefty," and Thornton Wilder did in "Our Town"), it was regarded as an innovation, though some centuries old. But in many other ways, "The Knight of the Burning Pestle" reads like a modern comedy—for instance, in the Wife's proud description of Ralph's astonishing acting, undiscovered by the professional stage: "he will act you sometimes at our house, that all the neighbours cry out on him; he will fetch you up a couraging part in the garret, that we are all as feared, I warrant you, that we quake again." (Dear patient reader, dear diligent amateur perhaps, does that strike a chord?).

Gradually, the interest seems to have shifted from the actual performance to the curious preparations preceding it, which have all the interest of those sectional working-models of locomotives exhibited in railway stations. "The Rehearsal," by George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, is perhaps the play of this kind most often referred to. An unusual example of the species was an anonymous play called "The Female Wits," presented at Drury Lane in 1697, unusual in that it concerned the rehearsal of an *opera*, reflecting the craze for Italian opera which had reached London shortly before.

The most perfect example, however, down to the present day, probably remains Sheridan's comedy, "The Critic," first presented at Drury Lane on 30th October, 1779. It is a splendid satire on the sham-heroic tragedy, with the characters in the hypothetical play including the Governor of Tilbury Fort, the Earl of Leicester, Sir Walter Raleigh, Don Ferolo Whiskerandos, Tilburina, etc. The "real" characters are equally magnificent—Dangle, the man-about-the-theatre ("are you not called a theatrical Quidnunc, and a mock Maecenas to second-hand authors?"); Sneer, the sophisticated cynic; Sir Fretful Plagiary, the eminent author ("this I will say—through all my knowledge of life I have observed—that there is not a passion so strongly rooted in the human heart as envy!"); the Italian musician and his French interpreter ("here are two very civil gentlemen trying to make themselves understood, and I don't know which is the interpreter"); Puff,



the press-agent ("I am sir, a practitioner in panegyric, or to speak more plainly—a professor of the art of puffing, at your service—or anybody else's")—they are uncomfortably recognisable, even in these later times, and I think the laughter of a literary audience at a modern production of "The Critic" might be a trifle uneasy.

The great value of "The Critic," the essential ingredient of all excellent comedy, lies in its continual adherence to probability, its reliance on undoubted fact, its flashes of undisputed wisdom ("a play is not to show occurrences that happen every day, but things just as strange, that though they never *did*, they might happen"). This solid basis of true comedy has been far better expressed by Shaw than I could ever hope to do, and here is his summary, as he himself might say, without extra charge: "Mr. Wilde has written scenes in which there is hardly a speech which could conceivably be uttered by one real person at a real at-home; but the deflection from common-sense is so subtle that it is evidently produced as a tuner tunes a piano; that is, he first tunes a perfect fifth, and then flattens it a shade. If he could not tune the perfect fifth he could not tune the practicable one." That condition is imposed on the sociological humorist also." That is Sheridan's strong point. The ill-timed interruptions of the rehearsal by the author's friends, the arguments over whether the cutting of a speech had been agreed or not, the despairing devices ("you couldn't go off kneeling, could you?"), the mute malice of inanimate objects—these are the uncomfortable facts of the theatrical life, but seen through the eyes of a humorous genius.

Anyone who has worked in the theatre, particularly in an industrious amateur company, will remember the heartbreak and fury, the accumulation of occasional misery, the disproportionate anger over trivialities which results from frayed nerves. For my own part, I have collapsed from hunger through forgetting to have anything to eat, and using my only bottle of liquid refreshment for mixing paint in an emergency; I have fallen off stepladders and battered my thumbs into pulp with a large hammer when I was too exhausted to take the precautions of a normal, sane, non-theatrical human; but it never occurred to me at the time to paraphrase Aeneas and say "perhaps some day I will be glad to remember even these troubles." A frenzied stage-carpenter, struggling desperately to fix an important door which will neither

open nor close, while the sound of the overture comes softly through the curtain, may not think his predicament is particularly funny; but it *is* funny in retrospect.

Sheridan embalmed a slice of that strange atmosphere as a model for future generations (like the earthen jar which Ripley claimed to contain "a portion of the genuine Egyptian darkness"). He also appears to have initiated the tradition that, in England, plays about the theatre shall be comedies. "The Critic" falls into clearly-defined sections, the first being a satire on pseudo-literary and arty circles, the second satirising the theatre itself. After him, the sections seem to have parted company. On the one hand there is the indefatigable Noel Coward, weaving his comedies around unbelievably theatrical types in their private and off-stage lives. Since Mr. Coward has been actively and exclusively involved in the theatre since his infancy, few people are better qualified to write about its extreme fringes. It is pointless to complain, as some do, because he appears to know no other world than that bounded by the three walls of a stage. Such criticism, in any case, has little effect on Mr. Coward, who will continue blithe-spiritedly on his way, judging from his endearing statement to the *New York Times* last December: "I shall write new comedies, for I have a great wit and I am a gifted man as well as being a very hard worker."

On the other hand there are the modern plays, which seem likely to continue also, about the actual machinery of rehearsals. The late James Agate used often refer to a war-novel, whether mythical or not, which had the magnificent opening sentence: "some scum has stole my boots." As I was about to say, the most delightful of these plays is the one-acter, "The Rehearsal," by Maurice Baring, which some scum has feloniously abstracted from my inextensive library. It concerned the rehearsal for the première of a melodrama called "Macbeth," and consisted mainly of argument between the star, Dick Burbage, and the much-abused hackwriter and horseholder named Shakespeare. It is a play of which I have the fondest recollections, and some day I hope to recover it. Out of the same stable came Terence Rattigan's chronicle of the touring company in "Harlequinade," a rather motheaten company who cannot remember in what town they are at the moment appearing, a company who recalled Peter Brook's story of the leading actor who wrapped himself in his cloak, stalked from his dressing-room as the overture ended, and

inquired sonorously : " What is the play, and where is the stage ?" Another amiable representative is Philip King's diverting fragment of the history of the Drossmouth Repertory Company in " On Monday Next."

It is strange that no playwright appears to have found material for a serious play about the theatre. Tchekov is almost alone in touching on the subject, in his tender study of the problems of the aspiring playwright and the young actress in " The Seagull." He dealt with the theatre again in " Swan Song"—the old actor coming out alone on the darkened, deserted stage and re-living his past triumphs until recalled to his surroundings by the anxious voice of his faithful dresser. The scarcity of such plays is even more unexpected in view of the fact that the scene immediately solves a playwright's initial and perennial problem—how to get an assortment of interesting characters into the same place, at the same time, on a reasonable pretext. Denis Johnston made wonderful use of the possibilities in " The Old Lady Says No," which may, I suppose, be classed as a serious play, but is not precisely the type under discussion.

Maybe the scarcity is due to the fact that theatrical people, from their continual necessity of projecting emotion over the foot-lights, tend to be a bit larger than life in their private moments. If the playwright remains true to his knowledge of the characters in a serious treatment, the result may strike the audience with that fatal sense of disproportion which is the cause of misplaced laughter. But this insistence on comedy is a pity, in a way, since it perpetuates the notion that actors are, if not actually vagabonds, at least cheerful wasters and good-for-nothings.

The theatre, however, in spite of its dubious name, has always been a rather honourable profession, mainly occupied by hard workers with high ideals. In this, as in many other things, the last word was said a long time ago, written regarding the same Richard Burbage referred to earlier, the leading actor in Shakespeare's company : "—so as those who call him a Player do him wrong, no man being less idle than he, whose whole life is nothing else but action ; with only this difference from other men's, that as what is but a Play to them, is his Business ; so their business is but a play to him." That is the essential and only difference between the actor and other men, and it is as true to-day



as when Richard Flecknoe wrote it, almost three hundred years ago. As the "Observer" put it rather differently, in a recent profile of John Gielgud: "the leading actors of our time are the least Bohemian of men—they care, perhaps excessively, about their own world and that alone. They mix with their own kind, talk their own shop, and are intensely professional. So far from being Bohemian, they are secluded and monastic." Let them, as Hamlet said, be well used.

## A BUNCH FROM THE ROAD-SIDE

*By Hugh Connell*

I

### Filago

"**T**HE HARE sat in the road and did not move. And the doctor took his gun off the back seat of the car and fired six shots, and still the hare did not move . . . and thunderbolts rolled down the side of the mountain in fiery balls that were the souls of unbaptised children . . . and up the road came a hearse drawn by six black horses and the driver flicked his whip around the young fellow's neck that was watching, and dropped him into a cave. . . . Did you ever see anything to beat that, you that were saying you might see a thing an odd time another one wouldn't?"

"No, indeed. Those sort of experiences are out of my line of vision altogether. Natural phenomena, I mean; what any man can see and scientist explain; they are always springing surprises on me. It's not often I come in without knowing why I went out, and that might be the last thing that was in my mind going out."

"Would you say . . . well, no matter—it's very peculiar, I'm sure. Well, I'll be taking this turn here. I'll wager you'll get home tonight without seeing anything to talk about; just a nice spring evening with a bit of haze low down and the stars coming out the usual way. You might as well be at home taking a read of the paper. Amn't I right?"

My companion slipped away down his bye-road, and I was just going to admit that I agreed with him, when some branches of old thorn that had escaped the road-men's bill-hooks leaned out and stirred my slumbering awareness. I think they "plucked at my rein," but not on their own behalf. At all events, the breath that was to have signified my assent went unburdened, for a glance I cast at the same moment at the sky was held by the first gossamer-fine beams of Northern Dawn reaching tentatively out towards the dark dome of the sky. The jibing spirit was forgotten as strand after strand of light was flung across from north-east to south-west and at last the quivering span was completed; a bridge, useless, open to no traffic, neither Allingham's royalties nor Keble's marching angels, but mine to use if I liked as an arch of welcome for a young relative returning this very evening from northern regions; Corona Borealis looking hospitably to see if she had made a safe journey to her Atlantic seaboard.

I dipped into the fringe of a little town, where the sky was kept in its proper place by street-lamps. Who would give it a thought, except perhaps a sick person or young child in an unlit, uncurtained room? And since in Ireland there is more fear than awe of Nature, the most likely reaction to something unusual would be to pull the bedclothes over the head.

A courting couple under a lamp-post had something else to think about; they spun webs about themselves as insubstantial as my girders and expected them to last a lifetime. In the big mansion across the road one light burned in an upper room. Most likely the old warrior-priest up there was on his travels again with his friend of the singed hair. If, coming down from the Mountain, he were to encounter the lovers at the gate, would his breath be fiery and shrivel their webs, or would it miraculously transmute them into something enduring?

Out again on the dark empty country road I found the reinstated sky. The span of light was gone; only a dull red glow over the black northern hills remained.

"In Siberia's wastes . . .

Night is interblent with day."

And day with night. Like the crippled children who read their picture-books projected on the ceiling of their ward, there must be a privileged few who can forget their troubles for a while, and enjoy a spectacle on the magnificent stage of an Arctic night.

## II

### Horsetail

“ Over the Mountains of the Moon,  
Down to the Valley of the Shadow,  
Ride, O ride—” the Shade replied,  
“ Until you come to Eldorado.”

**I** HAVE walked over the mountains of the Moon. (They are dangerous to ride). I think I know the Valley of the Shadow where the winter sun is lost so early. And that would make Eldorado somewhere near Truagh—or Kilmacduagh.

“ Mr. Twomey, are you the Shade? Are your roads paved with wheat? At Truagh the wheatfields run down to the white gravel beaches along Galway Bay, and round the Crooked Bell-tower of Kilmacduagh the fields are brimming over with it.”

“ You are perverse. The shade, like the Chief Baron, is a thing of the Past. The Poet was speaking Poetically, in Symbols. I am sure he meant Eldorado as the Goal of the Pilgrim Soul.”

“ And if I am perverse—am I not goaded to it by all the symbolism, otherworldliness, riddling that I am encompassed with? Trees like waterfalls, clouds like Michelangelo angels, small things great and great things like the evening procession of clouds as ridiculous as Walt Disney creations. Now for once I would like to stand with both feet on the ground, to see stereoscopically, to apprehend with the senses alone. My Eldorado is here in this Province; it cannot be paved with gold metal, it must be grain, worth so much a bushel, growing on land which Culloo has taken conacre. I would love to be in the Munster and Leinster Bank in Gort when the cashier pays over the crackling £10 notes—more than you or I ever handled—for the gold he and his sons gathered off the fields of Eldorado.”

“ And what will he do with it all? ”

“ Will he buy greyhounds? Will he buy bloodstock? That wise hardy man—will he invest in tractors or buy a farm of land? His father left him ten acres of poor land, and he sells more grain than any landowner I know, excepting one. The sons who might be gone to America or England or studying for clerkships are following the tails of his ploughs and minding his cattle up and down the country.”

“ Shall we put up a statue to Culloo in the County Town? ”



"And why not? That's why I'm pushing my bicycle over the Mountains of the Moon, white and bare as gnawed bones, to coast in haste into the Valley of the Shadow that fills the notch in the hills with a black blue like Mal Bay itself, and come to Doorus and Truagh, and ask leave of Culloo to make a model of his head and take snaps of his sons carrying corn. Then I will model a group to be cast in bronze."

"With a tractor?"

"Yes, or a pair of horses."

"He might hold the tractor in his hand, as a notably constructive bishop holds a church . . ."

"I will plant them before the Courthouse in the County Town."

"And will Culloo pay?"

"The State will pay."

And the taxpayer turned away with a sigh and said—

"L'Etat c'est moi."

### III

## Artemisia

THE dim lights were finally extinguished when our train was halted outside Willesden Junction. We sat in the dark and imagined London burning, though I was told there was no appearance in the sky of any great conflagration. London did not much concern me personally; as a soldier I could make out for myself in a confused situation. But the dry-looking old gentleman who happened to be the only other occupant of our first-class compartment, who, it seems, had observed me while well covered himself by his newspaper, presently showed signs of strain, and transgressed a rule of conduct.

Out of the dark it came, a fastidious tenor voice with a trace of the *de haut en bas* quality which is such an unjust handicap in these democratic days.

"The Secret Garden" . . . I leapt to it that the title of a French yellowback I had been reading had caught his eye—"Romance, mystery, poetry, Forrest Reid's dream garden out of the past, a garden Shelley found amongst the ruins of the Coliseum, an Irish garden that wasn't secret at all, only—what shall I say, remote . . . Young man, will you excuse me—you have things of your own to think of?"

"No," I said, lamely, but with conviction, "please go on."

"You have present and future to think about; it is probable that I shall be left with nothing but the past after to-night. Bombs in Bloomsbury are worse than fogs in Chelsea, but thirty years ago one didn't have to consider that. Perhaps you have been in Ireland yourself?"

I murmured something affirmative.

"Did it ever strike you that a secret garden is a commonplace there, nothing arcane about it? No, never thought about it, nor did I at the time. But as a guest at various country houses, I noticed in retrospect how the gardens were ignored—garden produce was there in plenty, but you would never think a man with a spade had anything to do with it."

"That's right," I said; "that was the idea in those grand days."

"Oh, but I remember one house where I am sure they had no notions like that. There were muddy gauntlets and baskets and secateurs lying about and local guests would be taken off into the woods and come back loaded up with cuttings and roots and things. That was a delightful house! I spent a fortnight there—1905, I think it was, resting after an election campaign. A wonderful library. Somehow I never got to the garden though I remember seeing the kitchen-maid being posted there on her bicycle for a bunch of parsley—or was it thyme the cook said? The paths were greasy and the kitchen-maid not an expert rider. Luncheon was very late that day—I almost felt I could have eaten my lamb without the mint sauce, but in those days no cook would have permitted it.

One day my host and the local priest and I were smoking in the library, threshing out the Irish Question again, I suppose, when my hostess, silver hair, school-girl complexion (the real thing), eyes and brows of a goddess, came in and said, "Mr. Du Cane is leaving to-morrow, and he has never seen the garden. I am just going down to tell Mr. McNab about the Endocrinum; perhaps he would come with me?" So of course I went, boots, basket, dogs and all. And we had a pleasant walk in the wood in the rain, but I never saw the garden."

"Why ever not? Did you lose your way and come to the gazebo instead?"

I regretted having made this frivolous interjection, for it put Mr. DuCane out of his stride, and he began again a little hesitantly.

"I should have certainly have lost my way alone. Let me see—there were woods, and a view out to a fairy or a devil's moun-

tain, and something black and white and green like an Underground poster—yes, a little lake under a cliff, a green lawn in front, swans, inverted—a pity to remember them like that, eh? Then there was a wood of big ash-trees with runaway laurel undergrowth that swung snaky black branches across the paths so that quite suddenly we were up against huge wooden double doors in a huge cut-stone wall.

The Garden Gate. I stepped forward to open it, but, of course, as it was the exit, there was nothing to open it with. The Entrance Door seemed about a quarter of a mile away round the corner of the wall; it was small and green with a large keyhole. "Now," said my hostess, "give me the keys." I never noticed keys in the basket I was carrying! I may have tossed them in the Lake with a careless gesture, or they may have gone down a fissure when we were discussing the age of the stone fort.

"Never mind," she said, "McNab or his minions will let us in."

So we hammered at the door, and then thundered at the gate. Suddenly she remembered that this was a church holiday and McNab was to go to see the Rector about his little boy or a ferret, and his wife would be gone too and have taken the key.

I had to leave by the early train next day—Lundy tithe-rents Committee, I remember, couldn't be missed.

"And you never went back?"

"No, never. I had hoped to; but you know how life takes one . . . Scotland, India, the Continent, plenty to think about. I don't know why I'm boring you with all this talk about a pointless, unromantic walk on a wet afternoon—I'm sure you would be much more interested in my recollections of the Durbar."

Before I could think of the right thing to say, the lights went on, the train crawled eastwards, and the thread of conversation was broken. But as we were drawing into Euston, Mr. DuCane, his impedimenta all tidily put to hand, said to me, rather awkwardly—

"Did you ever hear of people called —— living at —— in the County ——?"

I had the presence of mind to say no. I hope it was a white lie. I knew the house well, it was in the next county to mine. Last year an unlucky misadventure had sent it up in smoke. Normally he would have been bound to read about it in his *Times*, so I thanked the war for this small mercy, and saw him into a taxi, setting out to face the worst in Bloomsbury.



# THE TRUTH ABOUT ROBERT EMMET

THE PURSUIT OF ROBERT EMMET. By Helen Landreth. Browne and Nolan. 21s.

Robert Emmet, at the age of 24, challenged England in Ireland with something in the neighbourhood of a couple of thousand pounds as a war chest. Of the upper-class theoretically Republican leaders of Ninety-eight he took none into his confidence save Thomas Russell, his dependence in his project being upon such men as Quigley (Bricklayer), Hope (Weaver), Stafford (Baker), Howley (Clerk), Dwyer and Byrne (Farmers), and these were told only so much of his plans as they themselves were concerned with. He made his plans, established arms depots in Dublin, bought some arms and manufactured others, made some contacts (how slight or how close now impossible of ascertainment with any certainty), and at the age of 25 completely surprised the Government by getting out on to the streets of Dublin in open insurrection at a time when no danger was apprehended, when the Castle and other points of English strength in Dublin were wide open to attack and relatively defenceless against large-scale attack. A series of mischances and coincidences, the operation of that British Providence remarked upon by Mitchel, saved England, but the naked facts have so puzzled commentators that all sorts of suggestions have been made to account for this young man succeeding, with next to no resources, in what so many and so many generations of brilliant and able men failed, in getting out in open insurrection to the Government's complete surprise. It has been suggested that the Government knew all about it, that they wanted an insurrection and winked at the preparations, that they suggested it to Emmet through their agents, and every sort of permutation and continuation of these reasons has been urged to account for what was a sheer miracle.

Miss Landreth's book crystallises all these suggestions and doubts and wonderments. She is an American who got interested in Ireland in 1925, an interest which deepened into a passionate attachment, and she was especially attracted by Emmet. She spent seven or eight years in examining all the manuscripts and printed records having a bearing on Emmet's insurrection, and she concludes that the insurrection originated with Pitt: that Pitt suggested to Marsden, Under-Secretary at the Castle, that it would be a good thing to have another Irish insurrection, and that Robert Emmet would be a suitable person to induce to organize it: that Marsden accordingly sent an agent to France, where Emmet then was, with a document or letter, forged, of such a nature as to induce Emmet to determine on an insurrection and return home. that his plans and preparations were known and were carefully watched from his return in October, 1802, till the insurrection: that the Castle authorities took the risk because they and Pitt wanted an insurrection: and that the object of it all was to get Addington out of office and Pitt in by discrediting the Addington administration. The book not alone presents this theory in its fullest comprehensiveness, but it gives also every possible reason which can be urged in its favour.

What authority is there for the story of Pitt? The source of it is Dr. Thomas Addis Emmet, grandson of the first Thomas Addis, and author of several books about the Emmets. He took the greatest interest in his family history, and when he was a very old man he made exhaustive searches in every Dublin graveyard in which there was any likelihood of Emmet's body having been buried, but in vain. His first visit to Ireland was in the summer of 1880, when he met Madden and was given such information as Madden had about Robert. He returned the next summer, 1881, was put in touch with Sir Bernard Burke, Keeper of the Records at the Castle, and arranged with him to get copies of every paper in the records which bore on the 1803 insurrection. Seventeen years afterwards, in his book, *The Emmet Family*, 120 copies privately printed in 1898, he stated that in the course of his meetings with Burke that gentleman had told him that he had seen in the 1803 papers:—

A letter from Pitt, the English Tory Minister, then at the head of the British Government, addressed to Secretary Marsden, directing that another outbreak should be gotten up in Ireland "at all hazards," and suggested that "Robert Emmet, who was in Paris, should be approached for the purpose."

Dr. Emmet was then 70 years of age, and it is presumed that the statement made by Burke was a verbal one—else the document would have been given in Burke's own words—, so that what we have is not what Pitt wrote, nor what Burke said he wrote, but Dr. Emmet's recollection, seventeen years after the event, of what Burke said Pitt wrote. Pitt is referred to as the head of the British Government. But he ceased to be that on 5th February, 1801, and was not again that until April, 1804, so that if Dr. Emmet's recollection is accurate the letter must have been written before 5th February, 1801, and, as Robert did not return to Dublin until October, 1802, those who hold that he did so in response to Marsden's summons commit themselves to believing that Marsden waited a year and a half before giving effect to Pitt's order, and then obeyed it a year and a half after Pitt had ceased to be Prime Minister and a year and a half before he again became Prime Minister. During most of these three years Pitt was completely withdrawn from Parliament, owing to illhealth, reappeared there only after the renewal of the war with France, and became Prime Minister again by common consent in April, 1804, because England was in danger. It was *that* that brought him back to power, because the King disliked him and liked Addington—Addington treated him like a human being whereas Pitt treated him like a rubber stamp.

The Pitt story, it seems to me, is in the highest degree impossible.

Consider now the question which immediately arises: *Did Robert Emmet get any message at all from Ireland? Did he, when he left France for home, have any notion in his head of starting an insurrection?*

Dr. Emmet, Madden, Postgate, and Miss Landreth answer these questions more or less affirmatively. Dr. Emmet states that Robert had decided to go to America with Thomas Addis when the message from Dublin deflected him. Madden states that Cloncurry told him that when he dined with Robert and Thomas Addis in Brussels in September, 1802, he tried to persuade Robert that the project was a foolish and a fatal one. But there is in existence evidence from Robert himself which gives an entirely different reason for his return home in October, 1802, which Dr. Emmet printed in *The Emmet Family*, and the significance of which he did not appreciate. Robert had been on the Continent

since some time in 1801, and had made many friends there. One of them was the Marquise de Fontenay, and four letters of his to this lady were discovered amongst her papers, and are printed by Dr. Emmet. On April 24th, 1802, Robert wrote:—

... I believe I am myself on the point of making a sacrifice by returning to Ireland, which though it is by no means so great a one as yours is, will nevertheless be a very painful one to me. . . . My brother is determined to make America his residence when he obtains his liberty, and he is anxious, if my ideas agree with his, that I should accompany him. The rest of my family will be obliged to remain in Ireland, so that just when I supposed that the peace would enable us all to be united, I have left for alternative but to choose between those who are dear to me in this world and decide on which I must abandon. If I only thought of myself, if I only took into consideration the sorrows that are before me in Ireland, and the advantages I would find in the society of my brother, I would joyfully share his fate; but on the other hand I find that my father and mother have left me perfectly free to make my choice, and have made the sacrifice of their own wishes, and that sacrifice shows me that I must not allow myself to be carried away by personal motives.

I have therefore determined on returning to Ireland, provided I can do so without contracting any engagement that might compromise my honour. . . . I am not, however, certain that this can be done, and I doubt it myself. I am not, in any case, to leave, until time will show us more clearly the intention of the British Government; but this uncertainty is still more painful.

Is it not most probable that this, his affection for his aged parents, and for his sister, was the reason for his return? Cloncurry's statement, referred to above, rests on Madden's recollection. But here is Cloncurry's own statement from his own autobiography:—

When I left Ireland in 1797 Robert Emmet was a mere boy, but full of talent, enthusiasm, and kindly feeling. Both brothers dined with me in Paris the day before Robert returned to Ireland for the last time previous to his fatal outbreak; and *although that catastrophe was not then thought of*, I remember the most urgent entreaties being vainly used by his friends, to dissuade him from a visit, which all felt to be full of danger to him, and the sad consummation of which so fully justified those gloomy forebodings.

Madden prints a statement from James Hope, which has the following:—

Mr. Emmet was not, as has been supposed, the originator of the preparations of 1803. These had been begun in Dublin, to second an effort in England, expected by some Irishmen, under Colonel Despard. . . . and he prints a statement found in MacNeven's papers, which has this:—

In 1802, when T. A. Emmet arrived in Brussels from Hamburgh, his brother Robert came to meet him from Paris, and stayed there till November, when he returned to his family in Ireland. At the time he was in Brussels, he (Robert) had no knowledge of any designs being then entertained in Ireland to make another attempt to throw off the British yoke. . . .

Whatever about time, reviews must have a stop. I have given grounds for suggesting that Miss Landreth's main position is untenable. Her secondary position, that the Government knew of the preparations, but let them go on because they wanted an insurrection, is equally untenable. They got lots of vague general information, but nothing more specific than the sort of alarmist



reports they were accustomed to getting from alarmed and over-zealous loyalists, and there is no reason to think that they did apprehend anything serious. Not alone were they not watching Emmet, but they did not know what he looked like, and it was the Provost of Trinity who, in June, 1803, supplied them with a description of him. They did not know of the situation of the arms depots, and Miss Landreth herself prints documents which show them, after the insurrection, making furious efforts to get information about those. They did not know who was "in" the plan, and they harried every prisoner repeatedly to get names of the leaders, and of anybody who was ever seen in company with anybody known, after the event, to have been in, or to have been sympathetic with, the insurrection. Madden, who recorded his opinion that enough information had been given for the Government to swoop down before things came to a head, also says, in regard to information given to the Lord Lieutenant in person by two members of the Merchants' Yeomanry Corps:—

Their representations were not believed. It was no wonder if they were not, for there probably had not been a week for the last half century when the Government had not received some alarming intelligence of an intended disturbance of the peace—a tumult, a riot, a conspiracy of some kind, or an insurrection.

The least satisfactory part of Miss Landreth's book is the freedom with which the word *informer* is thrown at various people, and the generally uncritical acceptance of statements made, or alleged to have been made, with regard to men and to events, in secret under pressure or in secret for money, to the Castle. Arthur O'Connor is labelled as an informer early in the book and considerable animus is shown against him right through. John Keogh is similarly labelled. Peter Burrowes is accused of having framed his cross-examination of Crown witnesses at the trial so as to damage his client. William Putnan McCabe and Michael Quigley are accused of having been informers before the insurrection. There is no foundation for these charges. O'Connor and Thomas Addis Emmet quarrelled at Fort St. George, the quarrel being of Emmet's making. They were temperamentally incompatible, O'Connor being a man with aristocratic connexions (he was nephew and heir to Lord Longueville and was disinherited when he became a United Irishman), and of a masterful and flamboyant disposition. He regarded himself as the leader of the movement after his great friend, Lord Edward, died. There was a strain of wildness, of eccentricity, in the O'Connors, but no meanness and no treachery. He was brother to Roger O'Connor, and uncle to Fergus O'Connor, and another brother, John, was a Major in charge of British troops at Naas in 1797, and his expansive flamboyant nature was incomprehensible to Emmet. When Robert Emmet visited Fort St. George in 1800 he reconciled them, but it did not last, and they were again reconciled in June, 1802, when they were released. But again it did not last. O'Connor's ingenuous and genuine assumption of leadership irritated Emmet and he refused to act with him, even when in the winter of 1803 Napoleon asked that the two Irish factions in France should get together. O'Connor lived to a ripe old age, but he continued to be so objectionable to England that only once, when he was quite old, was he allowed to visit Ireland on family business. The charge against John Keogh has been investigated in the current (March) number of *Studies* by Rev. Francis Finegan, S.J., who has shown that while there was an informer named Keogh, he is never referred to as John Keogh but as Keogh or J. Keogh.

A document relied upon to suggest that Michael Quigley was giving information before the insurrection is qualified in a footnote as possibly referring to another Quigley. McCabe is regarded with suspicion because he was a friend of O'Connor's. As for the trial, Peter Burrowes asked what questions he could, hampered by Robert Emmet's own desire to make no defence at all within the forms of law.

If one realises the nature of a secret information one must realise also the necessity for the greatest care in placing any value upon it. It is given in secret, it may be anonymous or it may be in a false name, or it may purport to be by some living person. It is given either for money, in which case the reward is commensurate with the sensationalism of the statement, with its confirmation of the hopes or beliefs or fears of those who receive it, or in fear and against the grain, in which case as little of the truth will be disclosed as will be accepted, and everything will be distorted and disguised. It only comes to the light of day when everybody of the period is dead, and under its operations any man in public life is likely to have his reputation attacked when he has been long dead. Miss Landreth has taken all these documents at their face value.

The Fort St. George prisoners were not released until June, 1802, when they went to France. There they formed two groups, Thomas Emmet and his friends and O'Connor and his friends. Both groups appear to have assumed that the United Irishmen had been reorganised, had a new Directory, were functioning as an organisation, and were preparing another insurrection. They could not know, and it seems to me improbable that there was then left any real Organization, anything beyond inactive groups in places, embers. But at any rate, Robert Emmet was his own Council, his own Directory, his own Commander-in-Chief, his own Planner. He had no Organization, no oaths, no framework that could be disrupted by anything save his own removal. He countered the possible informer by keeping his plans to himself. He made contact, probably very loose and informal, with the groups and embers in the provinces, but his reliance was the capture of Dublin. He believed that if Dublin were taken the country would rise, and his contact with the country was probably confined to a general understanding with individuals there that when Dublin rose they would at once call out their own localities. But his messengers, his co-ordinating agents, failed him in Dublin, his Staff was too small, possibly too deficient in intelligence, certainly deficient in any real knowledge of the plan, and the heart of the plan failed. The very quality that had enabled him to prepare an insurrection almost at the gates of the Castle, and to get it out on the streets unmolested, the secrecy, was a material cause of its failure.

Finally, let Robert Emmet himself make his own statement on his own insurrection, his own plan, and the reasons why he failed. Various statements to the effect that he had been invited over from France by "some of the first men in the land," that he had been disappointed of help that was promised, and similar, have been attributed to him and used with great effect by those who always lined up against secret organisation and physical force. A similar statement "this conspiracy is the work of the enemy" has been attributed to Russell. But the authority for these statements is Dr. Madden. They appear in the statement of Hope, as printed by Madden. That is to say, at their best they are October, 1802, which Dr. Emmet printed in the *The Emmet Family*, and the significance of which he did not appreciate. Robert had been on the Continent

Hope said Emmet and Russell said. Statements of this sort, of this gravity, are worthless unless they can be produced in the specific words of the speakers, in their full contexts and in their actual spoken order. There is another statement, in Emmet's own handwriting, found in the Depot after the insurrection, which contains the words, "a precipice is opening under my feet from which duty will not suffer me to run back," which has often been quoted as indicating that he knew he had been betrayed. But what goes before these words is this:—

I have little time to look at the thousand difficulties which still lie between me and the completion of my wishes: that those difficulties will likewise disappear I have ardent and, I trust, rational hopes; but if it is not to be the case, I thank God for having gifted me with a sanguine disposition. To that disposition I run from reflection; and if my hopes are without foundation—if a precipice . . . etc.

which shows beyond doubt that the precipice he referred to was not betrayal but failure.

There exists another document, in his own handwriting, "Account of the late plan of insurrection in Dublin, and cause of its failure," which he wrote to Thomas Addis on the night before his execution, which never reached him, but which survived by a miracle and is printed by Madden. After detailing the plan in six pages, and the points in which the arrangements failed, it says:—

Had I another week—had I one thousand pounds—had I one thousand men, I would have feared nothing. There was redundancy enough in any one part to have made up, if complete, for deficiency in the rest, but there was failure in all—plan, preparation, and men. . . . I know how men without candour will pronounce on this failure without knowing one of the circumstances that occasioned it; they will consider only that they predicted it. Whether its failure was caused by chance, or by any of the grounds on which they made their prediction, they will not care; they will make no distinction between a prediction fulfilled and justified—they will make no compromise of errors; they will not recollect that they predicted also that no system could be formed—that no secrecy, no confidence could be restored—that no preparations could be made—that no plan could be arranged—that no day could be fixed without being instantly known at the Castle—that Government only wished to let the conspiracy ripen, and crush it at their pleasure—and that on these grounds only did they predict its miscarriage. The very same men that would have made an offering of unlimited sagacity at the shrine of victory, will not now be content to take back that portion that belongs of right to themselves, but would violate the sancity of misfortune, and strip her of that covering that conduct would have left her.

That is not a Robert Emmet in a trap, betrayed, despondent, apologetic. It is the Robert Emmet of the speech, high-minded, confident, exultant, with nothing to regret and nobody to blame.

Salute, Robert Emmet! Live for Ever!

P. S. O'HEGARTY.



# DRAMATIC COMMENTARY

By A. J. Leventhal

THE HOUSE OF BERNARDA ALBA. By Garcia Lorca. Abbey Experimental Theatre.

ASMODÉE. By François Mauriac. Gate Theatre. Longford Productions.

THEATRE IN IRELAND. By Michael MacLiammoir. Published for the Cultural Relations Committee of Ireland by Colm O Lochlainn. Price 2/-.

The Abbey Experimental Theatre showed not only its good sense in allowing a Dublin audience to see Garcia Lorca's *The House of Bernarda Alba* but also its experimental breadth in inviting Eric Bentley to produce it. There is much to be said for *sinn fein* as a guiding principle for a national theatre but such a policy, however excellent in plays by Irish writers dealing with Irish life and interpreted by Irish actors, is not necessarily valid when the work of a foreign dramatist is in question.

The choice of Mr. Bentley fully justified this departure from custom. He had his idiosyncracies of which perhaps the most curious was the throwing on to the curtain before each act a brief *résumé* of the impending action thereby destroying in the audience the element of surprise and suspense essential for the full enjoyment of drama. There was nothing spectacular in his production but he managed in a workmanlike way to imbue his actors with a belief in their parts and to make them live up to their sombre Spanish clothes as well as to enter into the grim suppressed life of the female Alba household.

The atmosphere of suppression, admirably evoked by Lorca, was satisfactorily shown in the production. Bernarda, in her fierce social pride, turned her house into a near-nunnery in order to keep her five daughters in seclusion. There was no dowry for any daughter, save the eldest and, since they might only marry into families of the same class, they were doomed to celibacy. The plain Angustias had inherited what there was of the patrimony and she was the only one who might from the balcony exchange greetings with the *caballero* to whom she was betrothed. However, the youngest daughter Adela was secretly meeting her sister's *fiancé* who no doubt would have married her if the marriage portion were hers. But for marriage to a *caballero* in an Andalusian village a modicum of pesetas is a *sine qua non*.

The intrigue is discovered. Bernarda gets her gun to shoot the male intruder into her female sanctuary. She misses. Adela hangs herself. And Bernarda, in a final matriarchal effort to preserve her standing with her prying neighbours, insists loudly that her daughter has died a virgin.

The bitter, dominating Bernarda was played adequately by Peggy Hayes. A more mature actress might have lent the part more dignity. Personally I should have preferred Eileen Crowe in the role. I recall a similar part in another Spanish play—Sierra's *Kingdom of God*—in which she excelled. As it was, Eileen Crowe breathed Iberian fire as La Poncia, the housekeeper, in the early scene in which she abuses the household, cursing them for meanness whilst she herself refuses alms to the *pardioses* who, in Spanish fashion, come to beg after the funeral of



the head of the house. Later, however, as a sycophant hiding her spleen, she lapsed distressingly into a maudlin Abbey wheedle when what was required was subtle irony. Angela Newman should go far as an actress. She had charm and poise as Adela, rising to heights in her demand for love and life while still young and beautiful. Doreen Madden, as the hunchback sister Martirio, gave a sincere and moving performance, whilst Brid Ni Loinsigh, Bernarda's mad mother, fondled her fleecy lamb like an Ophelia who had strayed into pasture land. But this is praise.

The play filled the Abbey Theatre for the two nights allotted to it. It might well have run for a fortnight. Lorca is better known as a poet than as a playwright but in this drama he has made real the etched verse in which he evokes the villages of the countryside of his birth. We sense the "calvary on the bare mountain" that he wrote about, the centennial olive trees and the eternally rotating vanes.

"O lost village in the Andalusia of weeping."

When novelists change their medium and turn to playwriting, they are by no means uniformly successful. Galsworthy could employ both media but Henry James and Arnold Bennet became minor dramatists; whilst, nearer home, Brinsley MacNamara, all told, shows greater power as a writer of novels than as a dramatist. Mauriac, whose output of novels is immense, maintains his stature when he turns to the stage—a situation not common in French literature. Giraudoux had the same dual facility but Balzac, Bourget and Barrès (to mention a few established major novelists) become lesser creators when they turn to drama. Sartre pointed out, by way of adverse criticism, that Mauriac is no novelist and that his romances have a stage technique. Whatever the validity of this comment in relation to the quality of Mauriac's novels, it may explain why he shows such mastery of the theatre on the all too rare occasions that he uses it as a medium of expression.

Technically *Asmodée* moves with a smoothness that suggests the born man of the theatre. On the other hand, we are presented with an initial improbability that even the oiled mechanics of the action cannot help us to digest. When during vacations families from different countries exchange children for educational purposes, it is fantastic to expect us to believe that no reference would be made to their ages. The plot depends to a large degree on the arrival into the bosom of a French country family of a twenty year old Englishman, Harry Fanning, when a boy of fifteen is expected. Actually, and the play requires it, he looks much older than his years. Granted this improbability, it becomes easy to understand the middle-aged Marcelle's interest in him and his calf-love for her.

The complications which follow the inevitable falling in love of Harry with Marcelle's daughter Emmanuele are increased by the presence of the tutor, Blaise Lebel, who has an insane urge to dominate the whole household.

Emmanuele's part was a difficult one. It is not easy to suggest the young girl moving innocently, if with misgivings, from the thought of a life that was to be dedicated to God to its more wordly dedication to a young lover. Iris Lawler seemed to work too hard in this part, losing in a certain fussiness the spontaneous upwelling in a young girl's heart of the double impulse of religion and love. Marcelle's part is one in which any actress would revel and Gervase Mathews was supremely happy in it, moving easily and effectively through her many moods. The impression created by Blaise Lebel, as played by John Walsh, was that the

role was overstudied. The title of the play seemed to dictate a certain satanism which he allowed to overshadow his acting; he maintained throughout a twisted mouth as an external symbol of a tortuous mind. The result was a far too sinister interpretation which lent an almost melodramatic air to his every gesture. However, within the limits of his reading of the part which might have satisfied some people, he certainly gave a well-balanced performance. Aiden Grennel did what was artistically possible to make the badly drawn Harry Fanning a possible character. Blake Gifford's production was workmanlike, crisp, and, what was essential in a play of this kind, unobtrusive.

The Cultural Relations Committee of Ireland have begun their series of pamphlets on Irish life and culture with *Theatre in Ireland*. Apart from its contribution in the field of political activity, modern Ireland has, through the Abbey Theatre, had a pronounced effect on cultured peoples over the whole globe. So much so that the promised publication of an essay by Lennox Robinson on that theatre might have opened the series. However, Michael MacLiammoir gives the national theatre its rightful place in his general review of drama in this country.

Mr. MacLiammoir writes a lively prose and he ranges over a wide area in the forty-five pages at his disposal. He is at his best when writing about his own Gate Theatre and though he has much to say of its past achievements, the future looks gloomy to him; he believes we are likely to have a period of stagnation.

There is an error of fact in his placing of the first production of *The Countess Cathleen* in the Molesworth Hall. This should be the Antient Concert Rooms—now a cinema in Pearse Street. Perhaps a second edition might also correct the spelling of 'Giraudoux' the French dramatist and novelist.

This book, which is illustrated with humour and charm by Norah McGuinness, should have a wide sale both here and abroad. It is only two shillings.

## Art Notes

By Edward Sheehy.

ROYAL HIBERNIAN ACADEMY OF ARTS. The National College of Art.

WATERCOLOUR SOCIETY OF IRELAND. The Hall, Molesworth Street.

SPRING EXHIBITION OF THE DUBLIN PAINTERS' GROUP.

PAINTINGS, SCULPTURES AND WATERCOLOURS BY DONLEAVY.

EXHIBITION OF PAINTINGS BY F. T. MELOE. The Dublin Painters' Gallery.

RECENT PAINTINGS BY JEAN-JACQUES GAILLIARD.

RECENT PAINTINGS BY NEVILL JOHNSON.

DRAWINGS AND WATERCOLOURS BY PHILIP MOYSEY. The Victor Waddington Galleries.

This year's Academy, while not appreciably different from any within my critical memory, still gains a somewhat extrinsic importance through being heralded by a violent attack by Mr. John Keating, the new President, on critics and criticism in Ireland. "The critic of art is not a menace, but a nuisance." He is "simply a middleman who comes between the painter and the public," whose only qualification "seems to be that he should have made a mess of foot-

ball news." The ideal critics are apparently "children or simple people" who are alone capable of "sincere objective views." Without wishing to take Mr. Keating too seriously, since he was speaking at a students' debating society and not *ex cathedra*, I should like to advance a few counter-propositions. Irish journalism cannot support the full-time professional critic and is therefore inevitably served by the amateur with an interest in painting, or failing that, by the first journalist to hand. I do not therefore object to the word 'middleman,' if we agree to ignore its usual association with profit and venial interest. If all such criticism were suppressed to-morrow, favourable and unfavourable alike, the artists, particularly those whose names are still unmade, would be the first to complain. If we agree that representationalism, absolute fidelity to the object as given, is the highest end of art, then I will agree that "children and simple people" are the best critics, though by no means capable of "sincere objective views." In fact I should hate to offer them a choice between a Cezanne and an Alma Tadema and base my critical judgement on their preference. Finally I believe that criticism, though inferior to creation, is still a necessary function; but to defend that proposition would need an essay which must wait some occasion when there is less to criticise.

To write of the Academy requires, I find, a kind of induced schizophrenia, since among its academic levels there lurks the occasional *fauve* whose presence tends to disturb one's appreciation of the domestic fauna. Academic letters-patent are no criterion, for they are worn equally by originality, solid honesty and worth, sentimental vulgarity and slapdash crudity; while their absence may be equally uninformative. A comparable anthology of contemporary verse would be critically hounded as indigestible *panache*. That the Academy escapes this fate is no fault of Irish criticism; the same thing happens with the Salon and with Burlington House. Since the Academies are autonomous, self-creating and self-judging corporations, one can only conclude that they confuse art and the merest literacy and expect the critic and the public to do the same. I therefore accept the convention and take for granted the astonishing academic virtuosity of Sir Gerald Kelly, the social suavity of Leo Whelan, even the rumbustious energy of Sean O'Sullivan and take refuge in the last critical ditch by picking out the few pictures which I like: First, Jack B. Yeats' *The Singing Horseman*, which, though not of his best, stands out for its imaginative energy and the sheer joy of its paint; a small lovingly and honestly painted *Portrait Head* by Maurice MacGonigal; Charles Lamb's *Evening at the Harbour*, a landscape in which the light comes alive; Daniel O'Neill's sombre and imaginative *The Road to Conlig*; Colin Middleton's *Landscape with Baker's Van*, with its pulsating colour; W. J. Leech's freely painted portrait-head, *The Young Irishman*; John Keating's superbly dramatic drawing, *And in this Harsh World*. Among the sculpture Oisín Kelly's *Sabreur* shows an individual and very effective control of form and I particularly liked a number of small Balinese studies in terracotta by Arthur Fleischmann.

The small memorial exhibition of the work of James Sleator, the late President, while hardly representative of his best work, still give some idea of his valuable qualities as a painter: his straightforward honesty and uncompromising craftsmanship in portraiture; a combination of tenderness and clarity in still-life. I wish that the selectors had found it possible to include his portrait of Rutherford Mayne which is, to my mind, one of his best portraits since his return to Ireland.

During the past few years the Watercolour Society of Ireland has done much to outgrow the reputation for amateurishness and dilettantism which for so long attached to the medium and its practitioners. The present, 96th, exhibition, has



a fair body of work which is seriously creative and which completely overshadows the residue still devoted to the merely pious celebration of local scenery. I feel also that a certain tribute is due to the selectors for their increasing catholicity of taste. In the short space at my disposal I can do no more than pick out a very few of the highlights, remaining conscious of many undeserved omissions. I found Gladys MacCabe's *Day Trippers Caught in a Shower* excellent in the formal distribution of its detail; Max MacCabe's *Jar with Fruit* while finely painted lacked organisation. I liked Elizabeth River's simple and luminous *Threshing* and Nano Reid's boldly-painted *Boyne Valley*. On a more conventional level J. F. McCarthy's *Après-Midi*, *Montmartre* and *Au bord de la Seine* achieved their delicate atmosphere with sureness of touch; while Tom Nisbet's three exhibits were characteristic of his technical effortlessness and quiet lyricism, particularly his *Snow at Enniskerry*. I liked also Phoebe Donovan's *Gabriel*, a child-study in pastel.

Patrick Donleavy is young, American and adventurous in a number of different media, not always with equal success. His watercolours and drawings have a certain original charm in their easy spontaneity, clean wash and free calligraphy; in fact they show a natural control of line for its own sake rather than in the interests of literal transcription. On the other hand his oils are crude, clumsy and selfconscious; an attempt, as it were, to overawe by sheer unorganised weight of paint. His few pieces of sculpture, modern in idiom, are not impressive. Among the watercolours I liked particularly his charmingly simple *Strange Fruit*, the spontaneous calligraphy of *Still Life with Candlestick* and the economically-achieved character of *Tinker Woman*. Donleavy is talented; but too prolific and undisciplined.

The Dublin Painters' Group presents, as usual, a solid body of competent if not very inspiring achievement enlivened by a few original works. Patrick Hennessy was very unequally represented, typically by a beautifully painted though static still-life, *Rose and Pears*; much less happily by the more ambitious *After the Rain*, *St. Stephen's Green* which I found badly composed and anaemic in paint. *The Hayfield* seems to mark a departure on the part of the Rev. J. P. Hanlon in the direction of pure landscape, and a remarkably successful one; his *Springtime*, freely and cleanly painted, is still an echo of the calligraphy of Raoul Dufy. I liked Elizabeth Rivers' *The Man and the Mountain*, as well as her two small, unambitious landscapes. Anne Yeats had a nice piece of gentle satire in her pastel *That Good Man*, *The Clergyman*. Robertson Craig, who at one time studied with Patrick Hennessy at the Dundee Academy and who shows occasional traces of the same influences, is a newcomer to the group. By comparison with his fine portrait, *Mr. F. Christian*, *U.C.D. Boxing Team*, at the Academy, his exhibits here scarcely do him justice.

Felix Thoresen Meloe is a young Norwegian who, in general, treats painting with a careless braggadocio, with disastrous results. He is at his best, though by no means outstanding, in straight portraiture as in his idyllic and somewhat sentimental *Miss Siobhan MacKenna*, or the crude effective bravura of *Robert M. Smyllie, Esq.*, the latter partially defeated by the chromatic nonsense in the background. But where he attempts to express ideas in paint, as in *Son of Cain I* or *II*, or the pseudo-mystical *Ebb and Flow*, the combination of crudity in technique Meloe has a good, but still unpractised eye. His attitude to his medium is too cavalier, and naivety in conception completely defeats him. The portrait suggests



that he is still far too unschooled to allow his eye or mind to stray far from the object as given.

The work of Jean-Jacques Gailliard is well known and deservedly popular here since first exhibition at the Victor Waddington Galleries in February, 1948. In the interim he has achieved widespread recognition on the Continent and in America. He will be the subject of the second of a series of illustrated monographs on the best modern Belgian painters, sponsored by Belgian Ministry of Public Instruction. His father's friend, the late James Ensor, whose work is, unfortunately, scarcely known in this country, was the subject of the first, already published. Half of each edition is for sale abroad.

Gailliard's work in oils is fresh, vivacious and gay, expressing delight equally in the subject and the medium. He is capable of astonishing chromatic subtlety in a technique that is loosely Impressionist. He does not, however, allow the energetic play of light and colour altogether to obscure the form which is expressed in broad but sure calligraphy. *Le Tombeau de Spinola* which shows him at his best and, I think, most characteristic, offers a synthesis of all these qualities. But he can be successful also using paint of a more solid quality, as in the beautiful and quiet *L'Eglise de Kilquade*, or the restrained and almost sombre *Queen's Road, Dun Laoghaire*. Some of his Irish landscapes, *Paysage a Leenane (Connemara)*, or *La baie magique de Dublin* might be considered in conjunction with F. T. Meloe's claim that "the Irish climate kills a painter's colour sense."

Most of Nevill Johnson's work in oils is still strongly reminiscent of that of the early Middleton in its smooth paint and its preoccupations with cubism, abstraction and surrealism. In spite of the fact that he shows himself capable of considerable finesse in the chosen idiom of the moment, for me a great deal of his work has a disconcerting air of studied contrivance, or over-elaborate simplification. In short I have a feeling that his preoccupations are still too much with manner and technique; that he has yet to come to grips with life. While I liked his *Clown*, a cubist essay in yellows for its bold colour and fine architecture, I feel that his greater promise lies in a number of pictures which show a tendency, still slight, to depart from formal rigidity and unemotional quality in the paint, as he does in the tender and tonally delicate *Bird in the Hand*, or the restrained and subtly manipulated representationalism of *Ruth*. On the other hand it is perhaps unfair to judge his achievement by the present show since, I am told, ten of his best and most recent pictures were selected for inclusion in the exhibition of Modern Irish Painters, organised by Mr. James Plaut for the American Institute of Contemporary Art, and at present on tour in America.

"I believe that the painter, Philip Moysey, can teach us to see the Englishman in his country of the present period," writes Oskar Kokoschka, whose pupil he was, in the introduction to the catalogue of Moysey's exhibition. Even allowing that the claim may be a somewhat extravagant one to make for a young painter, it does, nevertheless, give a very good idea of Moysey's attitude to his subject. Moysey's work, in coloured pencils and watercolour, is altogether a direct and spontaneous transcription of visual experience; but in the process the experience is subjected to a refinement and a simplification which result in a quiet and lyrical charm. He is at his best with people of the English countryside where his truly selective eye captures the unconscious grace of natural gesture in repose. *Siesta II* is one of his best in this regard; though I found it hard to choose between his many studies of hop pickers which are all characterised by an unaffected sympathetic observation and illustrate Kokoschka's judgement that the painter's "eyes are open windows through which he looks with an alert mind."

## BOOK REVIEWS

TRIBUTE TO WORDSWORTH: A MISCELLANY OF OPINION FOR THE CENTENARY OF THE POET'S DEATH. Foreword by Herbert Read. Edited with introductions by Muriel Spark and Derek Stanford. Wingate. 12s. 6d. net.

This is a very interesting volume. It is in two parts, the first bringing together in convenient form all the best-known characterizations of Wordsworth from Hazlitt to J. R. Lowell; in the second part, some dozen of the younger writers of the present day join in the tribute of praise. Of the latter, I am inclined to give the best mark to Mr. John Heath-Stubbs in virtue particularly of two observations made by him: (1) that "there is really no evidence that his love for Annette was of anything but passing significance in Wordsworth's development"; and (2) that "the decline in Wordsworth's later work has been very much exaggerated." The latter courageous assertion is all the more welcome in view of Miss Helen Darbishire's almost authoritative statement elsewhere that all the poetry of essential value was written between 1797 and 1807. In a sense this is true, but only in the sense that, like many other poets, he was at his best when getting on to forty. More frequently than is generally admitted he was visited in his later work with the old afflatus: in many noble sonnets ("Mutability," "In King's College Chapel"), "Death of James Hogg," in "Yarrow Visited" (I remember meeting George Moore coming down the stairs in the National Library with tears in his eyes after reading the Yarrow poems. "Which," he asked, "is the most beautiful?"). And then there is the constant limpidity of language, the memorable line, such as

"The unrelenting voice of nightly streams"

in some halting lines written shortly before his death. Matthew Arnold and Walter Pater were in agreement that Wordsworth of all poets is most in need of selection, but many of us, like George Eliot, prefer to pick out for ourselves what we like.

We may suspect that the recent revival of interest in Wordsworth would not have been so general but for the belated appearance of Annette Vallon in his life-story. Much attention has been drawn to differences in the versions of *The Prelude*; and one early poem—the only poem of Wordsworth, curiously, which Matthew could not read, and it is indeed a pretty bad one—"Vaudracour and Julia"—has acquired the importance of a document. It is possible for those who have little reverence for Wordsworth to see in him something of an old rogue when he dictated the "Fenwick note" to this poem, in which he attributed the part played at least in some details by himself to a certain Dupleigne, and Mr. Herbert Read, who took the trouble to make enquiries in France, could discover no trace of such a person; so that the loyal Wordsworthian must find some excuse for what he has to regard as a fairly innocent fabrication. It has even been suggested that Wordsworth had committed a murder; and certainly there is bloodshed in "Vaudracour." Whatever happened, he seems to have returned from France overwhelmed with guilt and sorrow, which persisted for some years. And then came a sudden change, parting him forever from a painful chapter in his past. Mr. Herbert Read's theory has found some acceptance: that

the emotions generated by his experiences in France were now for a time fully recollected in tranquillity, but that remorse persisted, with a strain of hypocrisy, which at length brought him down as a poet. But is there not another possibility, to my mind a certainty, namely that through the action of an iron will and partly through something in the nature of a religious conversion, he remoulded himself, helped in this by a fortunate change in his circumstances? "Tintern Abbey" is one record of this blessed transformation. What had finally passed between him and Annette we do not know, but it looks as if they had come to some mutual understanding, and that a contributory cause of his new happiness was that he had escaped, honourably enough, from the consequences of his "guilt." His women-folk at least seem to have approved of his final conduct in the affair. Anyhow, he made of himself the Wordsworth whom we know: to many an unattractive personality, self-centred as an oaktree, the poet who did not hesitate to write (unconsciously translating Rousseau in the *Social Contract*):

"to promote and fortify the weal  
Of our own being is our paramount end;  
A truth which they alone shall comprehend  
Who shun the mischief which they cannot heal."

"But where would that bring us?" once asked William Larminie when I had quoted to him these lines.

JOHN EGLINTON.

THE WORKS OF GEORGE BERKELEY, BISHOP OF CLOYNE (Bibliotheca Britannica Philosophica). Edited by A. A. Luce and T. E. Jessop. Vol. III. ALCIPHRON OR THE MINUTE PHILOSOPHER. Edited by T. E. Jessop. Nelson. 30s.

That Berkeley should have used his stay at Newport, Rhode Island, the scene of the uncertainties and then collapse of his Bermuda project, to write *Alciphron* with its spaciousness and majestic argument is sufficient tribute to his qualities of mind and character. And it would seem that Berkeley, in transcending his immediate circumstances, stood at a moment in time when not only the thought and conflicts of the past and of his contemporaries but their shadows on our own day were apprehended by him.

Crito, with his dry wit, and Euphranor, generous, simpler and of a perhaps larger wisdom, are opposed by the atheists, Alciphron and Lysicles. Professor Jessop points out that Crito and Euphranor express the two sides of Berkeley's mind: a subtle, vigorous mind quickening a humane and liberal experience of the world. Naturally, some of the ideas Berkeley was concerned to refute are no longer in common debate; but the opinions of Alciphron and Lysicles, with their narrow ordering of the orbit proper to man's brief gaze on life, are strictly relevant to our time that clings to a chameleonic materialism. The book is subtitled 'an apology for the Christian religion against those who are called free-thinkers'; and by the term 'free-thinkers', or 'minute philosophers', are embraced, not merely the facile modish sceptic, but also the grubby cynicism of Bernard Mandeville, the magnanimous ethical theories of thinkers like the third Earl of Shaftesbury. Professor Jessop says of the deistic writing then current: "their writings exhibit a great deal of bad learning and bad argument, and some of them not a little bad taste, three things which Berkeley found intolerable." And one of the pleasures of the Dialogues is to observe the urbanity with which



Alciphron and Lysicles are encouraged to display, till their mouths are dry, their jejune and contradictory ideas. Thus Alciphron is allowed to expound, as lengthily as he cares, his discovery of "an endless variety, not only in particular opinions and modes of worship, but even in the very notion of a Diety . . . (and) instead of truth simple and uniform, I perceive nothing but discord, opposition, and wild pretensions . . . (so that) thinking men have concluded that all religions are alike false and fabulous." Then Euphranor replies with engaging blandness: ". . . may we not as well infer that, because the several sects of philosophy maintain different opinions, none of them can be in the right, not even the minute philosophers themselves?"

Alciphron, the iconoclast, and his eloquence for a freedom whose space is made to look curiously like the sad rubble of a bombed area; Lysicles, whose brightly-coloured ballet of tricksters, butterflies and lotus-eaters falls to static squalor: what they represent is attacked without quarter and yet, as Professor Jessop emphasizes: "*Alciphron* is a model of the psychology and logic of controversy, and, to a large degree, of the ethics of it too."

Content apart, the Dialogues are the exercise of a virtuoso, with their slow passages of theme and counter-theme, the triumphant chords, the changes of mood and tempo, the serene development, and over all a sparkle of wit.

The editing of the volume is, of course, impeccable; and the Introduction so masterly that the temptation to quote whole paragraphs is difficult to resist: the comparison of Berkeley's style with that of Bacon or Hume, the comparison with Butler as an apologist, the account of the deistic movement and the ethics of Mandeville and Shaftesbury, the analysis of *Alciphron*. But two sentences will serve to show its critical distinction: "It (Berkeley's language) carries over the insight and subtlety of the seventeenth-century metaphysicals into the simpler vocabulary, the smoother syntax, and the reserved rhetoric of the Augustan age. . . . Some of his passages read as though they were transcripts of a Socratic conversation in a new Attic tongue." It is further observed that an anthology of epigrams could be made from this one work—epigrams, moreover, that characterize the speaker. Thus, Clito: "Arguments, therefore, which carry light have their effect, even against an opponent who shuts his eyes, because they shew him to be obstinate and prejudiced"; or Euphranor: "Why then it should seem that sensual pleasure is but a short deliverance from long pain."

L. H.

THE MOOR OF VENICE. By Richard Flatter. Heinemann. 15s.

Dr. Flatter first saw the play, *Othello*, as a young man of eighteen. Looking back on his early enthusiasm, he comments: "My understanding has increased; but I frankly admit that my youthful feelings for the black-faced hero are, fundamentally, still the same. I still admire enviously, the man who so hungrily yearns to be one again with his wife, that when he sees no other way of being reunited with her, he makes an end of his life instantly." The many adverse criticism of the Moor were therefore to be refuted; and when he started to translate the play, he found the opportunity in one word of Iago's speech:

I hate the Moor,

And it is thought abroad . . .

The word 'And' implied, he felt, not a reason for hate but excuse for action, the word of a player who had found his cue. Studying the play from this angle—and with the determination to justify *Othello*—Dr. Flatter decided that the



significance of the first scenes lies in this: Iago, "a spiritual cripple" and resolved to possess Roderigo's money, invents on the moment the story of his equal hatred for the Moor; and, carried away by his passion for play-acting (which the audience is meant to observe first), he manipulates plot and puppets for the titillation of his perverse sense of comedy; that, in fact, his speech to ensnare Roderigo into going to Cyprus is "the only source of the ensuing tragedy." The psychological structure of the play then is built up from our view of Iago with "the mentality of a crazy actor"; and also from the scene in the Council-chamber with Brabantio's warning to Othello, that Iago was later to use with such devastating effect.

The reading given here sometimes casts strange shadows on the characters. It is pointed out that Iago, with his penetrating psychological insight, lies chiefly by distorting the truth: but in one place at least he speaks truly:

As I confess it is my nature's plague  
To spy into abuses, and of my jealousy  
Shape faults that are not.

a jealousy that is the habit of his mercenary, gross and completely egoistical nature. Malice is the climate of his mind, and his gloating imagination and nimble brain surely do more than feed a passion for play-acting: they unleash his malice to ecstasies of destruction. If Iago "drags him (Othello) with the utmost delight" to the murder, it would seem that the pure comedy has, like the genie, sprung to monstrous growth.

Dr. Flatter admits that Desdemona is no favourite of his, though he is ungrudging in his admiration of her end. He gives her an earthy quality that, it is possible, belongs more to the blunter speech of the period, to the thoughts of Othello and Iago; and his interpretation of her words is entirely coloured by the deceit she practised on her father. Thus her speech to Brabantio reminding him of her mother's "preferring you before her father" seems to him "as glib as it is sophisticated." But is it not rather a naïve scrap of logic to prove that duty lay with her inclinations? Her words: "I have lost him too" show her recognition that she has wronged her father and the fear that Othello blames her for it—or may they not be the half-sad assertion: "Where thou lodgest, I will lodge. If he is lost to you, then he is lost to me;" the theme of her passionate loyalty that is brought to its triumphant close when she calls the murder her own deed. Which is a greater gesture than Dr. Flatter allows. "She refuses to accept that it was he who murdered her. He cannot have done it. It must have been another." But why then blame herself? This view is necessary, of course, if the thesis is to be proved that Othello has not murdered her, that he is Iago's innocent victim, that "in a way it is Roderigo who murders Desdemona and Othello." Othello, it appears, is a man whose noble death is the victorious proof of his love. The opposite of jealous, without suspicion, his deeds are the expression of his good faith. His conviction of his wife's infidelity is "founded on rock. This rock is his absolute trust in Iago's absolute honesty and absolute selflessness." (The most rigid moralist might hesitate to agree with Dr. Flatter that had Desdemona been guilty, she would "be guilty of an unspeakable and unforgivable crime.") The argument cuts two ways. Why was Othello's faith in her so pitifully mean that the defences of his mind—his unsuspecting mind—at Iago's first attack begin to crumble and fall with whatever thunder of anguish? Why was it possible for Emilia so quickly to blast the rock of absolute trust in Iago?

We are shown here an Othello whose murder of Desdemona is not an act of revenge, nor do possessiveness and vanity drive him to it; rather his love is indestructible, unalterable, he is the greatest of Shakespeare's great lovers.

"When Othello enters the bed-chamber he has divested himself of his personal vindictiveness. He feels no longer the lust of revenge. He acts like a physician who, in order to save life, cuts out a cancer that, in his conviction, would otherwise eat into and destroy the very heart of humanity."

This sweeping disregard for Othello's own words, even his epithets as Desdemona lay dead, leads to the final scene. The Moor has learnt that he is really innocent, "it was in truth Iago who, using him as his ignorant tool, murdered her." Free, his self-esteem restored, he with ecstatic joy is reunited to his wife.

Dr. Flatter thus wipes out the tragedy, and one is left to contemplate a man the flaws in whose love were in no way his fault but due to the pressure of external events, a man contemptible and irresponsible. If, however, one sees in Othello a poet masquerading as a soldier and wincing when Iago—perhaps by chance—touches that weak point in his armour (the consciousness of being an ageing Moor and no courtier) his conflict has its measure of dignity, as has the final anguish of a poet who, lost in the toils of the exterior world, has basely thrown away his pearl. And Desdemona's fidelity that took his crime upon herself has its tragic echo: Othello sharing death with her.

L. H.

THE FORSAKEN GARDEN. An Anthology of Poetry: 1824-1909. Edited by John Heath-Stubbs and David Wright. The Chiltern Library. John Lehmann. 8s. 6d.

The anthology must surely be the hardest of literary growths, surviving the rages of the discontented reader and putting forth unfailingly its fruits of more or less beguiling shape. In this volume, *The Forsaken Garden*, the editors set themselves the interesting labour of finding poems not included in *The Oxford Book of Victorian Verse* that yet, by their charm and individuality, deserve a place with the better-known verse of the middle and later nineteenth century. As stated in the preface, anonymous ballads, songs and sea-shanties, and these on the grounds of being a living possession at the time, are the only verses in the book earlier than 1824—a year that, with the death of Byron, seemed to mark the end of an epoch. The arrangement has been to give, first, work by such later Romantics as Darley, Beddoes and Hood; next, the pastoral world of Clare and Barnes; and then the poems shadowed by Industrialism and religious unease. "It is some of the popular songs and ballads of the period which express more fully the unnatural and horrific environment created for human beings by the great cities." The concluding poems—1909 being the halting place—reflect the 'withdrawal from life' and the mysticism that formed the prevailing mood. One starts to enumerate particular pleasures like Beddoes' *The Old Ghost* and *A Dream*, Clare's *Secret Love*, Tennyson's *Song*, Barnes' *When Birds Be Still* and the poems by Emily Brontë; but, in fact, the freshness throughout this anthology will surprise and enchant the reader,

THE CHRONICLE OF JOCELIN OF BRAKELOND. Concerning the acts of Samson, Abbot of the Monastery of St. Edmond. Translated from the Latin, with Introduction, Notes and Appendices by H. E. Butler, M.A. (Oxon.), D.Litt. (Lond.). Thomas Nelson and Sons, Ltd. London, etc. 15s. net.

This volume is one of the series of Nelson's Mediaeval Classics appearing uniformly in parallel Latin original and English translation, under the joint editorship of Professors V. H. Galbraith and R. A. B. Mynors. The *Chronicle* was first printed in 1840, by John Gage Rokewood as volume 13 of the publications of the Camden Society; but the present text contains a number of corrections made with reference to the original MS. in the *Liber Albus* of Bury St. Edmunds; as well as elucidations of obscure passages through information contained in contemporary documents. Of Jocelin himself, little is known, apart from what he tells of himself in the course of the narrative. He has given a factual, prosaic, day-to-day account of the life of a mediaeval monastery. The narrative is filled with what the modern newspaper-man would probably call 'human interest' were it not characterised by an almost complete absence of the sensational. From the point of view of the historian it is, as the editor points out, "a mine of information, not merely about the life of a great monastery, but also concerning the management and organisation of a vast feudal estate." It is, therefore, a social and political document of the first importance. The *Chronicle* opens in 1173, six years after the Norman invasion of Ireland, the modern Irish historian will find it interesting as a first hand account of a politico-religious institution soon destined to overshadow the native monasticism in Ireland. Those with preconceived ideas regarding the corruption of monasticism will be sorely disappointed; while the pious may be shocked at the importance attached to rents and revenues.

THE CHILDREN OF THETIS. A Study of Islands and Islanders in the Aegean. By Christopher Kininmonth. John Lehmann. 15s.

Mr. Kininmonth, who already knew Greece well, served in the Middle East during the war and, as the publishers state, "had the good fortune to be posted to Samos in 1943, and to arrive in Athens with the first of the liberating troops." On the way home from Greece in June 1946, he and the soldiers with him, conscious of their probably dreary future in the modern world, stared entranced as the islands slid by. "On those evenings it seemed they must be a happy race, the Mediterranean islanders. Was (their) felicity based on a wholeness which was impossible to us? For that matter were the islanders' lives happier than ours, or was that impression a delusion of those still marine sunsets?" He determined to find out.

His account of the Aegean islands and their inhabitants is written with an almost personal pride in Greek history. His feeling is one of kinship, and his attention is held in ardent contemplation of their art. Familiarity with their myths, a sensitive eye for surface and texture and lively appreciation of the subtle ancient influences that still linger on and quicken the veins of the islanders, an awareness of pattern and delighted presentation of people and custom invite, at times, comparison with Norman Douglas's account of the Cyclades. Occasionally the descriptions are too drawn-out, but on the whole Mr. Kininmonth succeeds in conveying the loveliness and the primitive wisdom that mean so much to him, and with the memory of which he returns to a sadder and corrupted mainland.

The photographs that illustrate the text are numerous and very fine.



TREASURE IN THE CARIBBEAN. A First Study of Georgian Buildings in the British West Indies. By A. W. Acworth. Pleiades Books. 12/6.

This study of houses and public buildings in the West Indies is a very interesting, if brief, examination of how the British settlers developed a style of architecture that, while retaining Georgian features, was best suited to the tropics. Mr. Acworth indicates the reasons, historical and economic, for the differences to be found in the buildings on each island. The photographs admirably illustrate the text; though the inclusion of more interiors—there is only one—and more background detail would have been a material aid in relating the architecture to social circumstance and in judging how far it is in harmony with the landscape. *Treasure in the Caribbean* is, however, a welcome addition to *The Georgian Handbooks*.

SCIENCE, LIFE AND LITERATURE. By M. P. Shiel. With a Foreword by John Gawsworth. Williams & Norgate. 10s. 6d.

M. P. Shiel, as this volume of collected essays shows, had an exhilarating life trouncing pedantry and goading content; but after diminishing the former glories of literature, he showed a respectable pedagogic desire to allot marks and places, to set examination papers. And from the class-room he would make his announcements: "But if Homer nods, and Sheakespeare snores, if Dante talks in his sleep, and Milton walks, this is only what we may expect: the brain till lately was not very awake or wary . . . Dickens now was a clown . . . I know that there is more psychic value in Prof. Haldane's right auricle than in all the vitals of a mind like Matthew Arnold's . . . Meredith's thoughts are veiled prophets of Khorassan, all veil, and no prophecy . . . if any of those queer-headed people like Byron, Tasso, Alfieri, Cowper, Wilde, Verlaine, Savage, Lee, Shelley, and the rest, were geniuses, then let me be a man-in-the-street"—though often the shattered idols and disgraced pupils were cunningly restored to a measure of beauty and favour. Some of his opinions sagged loosely in dogmatic curves, as when he urged people to read few, and then only the best, books with minds scoured of tradition—mature taste evidently dropping like ripe fruit into the mouths of the new born.

A poet of science and progress, drunk with a cosmic wine, Shiel saw this generation greater than any of the past. Sobriety, however, may descend on the reader who attempts to list our contemporaries whose achievements eclipse those of, say, Shakespeare, Rembrandt and Beethoven.

PHOENIX AND TURTLE. The Unity of Knowing and Being. By Thomas Gilby. Longmans. 16s.

The Thomists, having under the darkness of inviolability replaced St. Peter by St. Thomas, next drove all other philosophies, past and future, into the desert. After this, anything was possible—even the recent pronouncement of a Dominican priest from the pulpit: "The Church *allows* scientists to play about for a bit." Crumbs from the guardians of all truth and all knowledge are not to be despised; and Father Gilby is generous in his effort to make the fare palatable and easy to digest.

*Phoenix and Turtle* was prompted by his conversation with an engineer in a warship during the last War. The latter, uncertain whether praying for the convoy's safety would make any difference, whether the wills of the higher powers could be thus influenced, decided "to concentrate on his valves and



gauges and emergency alternatives"—at any rate till Gibraltar was reached. The unity of knowing and being ("Two distincts division none") is the theme of the book; and, after being allowed a prolonged stare at 'isness', the reader is led by careful stages to the final proofs for the existence of an eternal mind. It is a masterly and lively exposition of Thomist philosophy—an exposition, that is, likely to be appreciated by the modern lay mind. Which means a discreet silence about such beliefs of St. Thomas as that the blessed in heaven would be able to enjoy, and benefit from, the sight of the damned and their torments. This silence, unfortunately, deprives the reader of two useful explanations: how 'the total cause of everything' is yet not the cause of original sin; and where hell has its place when the eternal minds holds all things and all finite minds.

There is one curious thing about this highly interesting book: Father Gilby has not answered the engineer's questions.

**POLICEMAN'S NIGHTMARE.** By Marten Cumberland. Hurst & Blackett. 9s. 6d.

If this mystery-thriller is a "policeman's nightmare," it is a thriller reader's dream. Our redoubtable and respected friend—it's safer to be on the side of the law—Commissaire Saturnin Dax of the Quai des Orfèvres, is back with us again—this time with an exceptionally knotty problem to solve. It would be criminal in a reviewer even to hint at the ingenuity of the plot, but you may rest assured that Marten Cumberland will keep you guessing until the very end.

Mr. Cumberland has now about a dozen of these really well-written and carefully planned Dax mysteries to his credit, and it says much for the author that the burly, draught-fearing Commissaire and his Angolophile aide-de-camp, Felix Norman, appear in each successive tale with undiminished vigour and originality. The witty, apposite, and *recherché* chapter headings, together with the terse precision of the writing, put Mr. Cumberland's work in a different world from the average hastily concocted and flung-together shocker on the market to-day.

Above all, Saturnin Dax and his colleagues of the Judicial Police move and have their being before that most magical of all backgrounds—Lutetia Romanorum—Paris!

**HENRY JAMES REPRINTS.** "The American." With an Introductory Note by Michael Swan. "Washington Square." Introduction by Valentine Dobrée. "The Lesson of the Master." And Other Stories. Introduction by Michael Swan. The Chiltern Library. John Lehmann. 8s. 6d. each.

Mr. John Lehmann has earned our gratitude by choosing the definitive text for his Henry James reprints. The prefaces are so much a part of the pleasure: that blissful abandonment in the whole ocean of language, that serene emergence still so near the point of immersion as to confound the spectator. Nor would one miss a single one of all his exquisite sensations at committing his characters, especially when the commitment is to the most shifting, rarefied multidimensional situations, however calculatedly obedient to flesh and gravity. Mr. Michael Swan says, in his introduction to *The American*, of the repeated theme of sophisticated European background and the innocence and honesty of the New World: "the fascination of most of these international stories is that in them we see James undecided whether, after all, it were not better to smile at innocence and welcome sophistication. It is this duality which often made it impossible to tell whether he was an American writing about Europeans, or a European writing about Americans." Miss Valentine Dobrée refers to the

dramatic quality of *Washington Square*. It is an enthralling novel; and for the student of James's development to its ultimate phase, there is the pleasure of examining here his prose stripped to its bones—or rather of feeling the bones before they sag with weight of flesh. It would be difficult to imagine a more congenial subject for James than the common theme of the stories collected in the volume *The Lesson of the Master*. It must always have been a part of his rich laboured contemplation: "the artist enamoured by perfection" and his "troubled artistic consciousness." In them he is articulate about what literature means to him; but his preface, with its assumption that he has worked out the greatness of his celebrities, that he has given nothing on trust, makes it a curious problem to decide how far he succeeded in his purpose—curious from the very fineness of the irony, the exquisite handling of situation. The impression remains that his sophistication was oddly, almost incredibly, unaware of the quality of the temptations that here represent the world and the devil. That, however, is part of the fascination: his particular blend of the most precious vulgarity with a passionate devotion to the realization of the world provoked by his detachment.

MOUNTAINS IN COLOUR. By Frank S. Smythe. Max Parrish. 25s.

This enthralling account by the late F. S. Smythe of the mountains he climbed in the Himalayas, North America, Switzerland and Great Britain explains as clearly as it can be done, their overwhelming fascination for the mountaineer: the stimulation of exploring fully one's own reserves of mental and physical power, the thrill of great solitudes and heights, the circumventing of imminent danger, the response to their splendour. So, as a small boy on his first visit to Switzerland, he stared motionless from the windows of the train at the Alps in the early morning light. "And they were strangely familiar, for it seemed to me that I had come back to something I had already seen and loved." Towards the end of his life he wrote: "No man has really lived until he has looked into the heart of Nature, and learned to appreciate the magnificent world on which he has been created."

His pen is equally eloquent whether he describes a Mount Everest expedition, the tragedy of the Matterhorn ascent by Whymper and his companions, the beauty of British hills or the glories of the Rockies. The eerie delusions of men at great heights, the people of Tibet, the Switzerland of the climber, the history of the Canadian Rockies, the start of a forest fire: every page is vivid with his gift for creating atmosphere. His coloured photographs, of which fifty-seven illustrate the text, would doubtless have been treasured by the Hindu scribe whose celebration of the Himalayas is quoted:

"He who thinks of Himachal, though he should not behold him, is greater than he who performs all worship in Kashi (the sacred city of Benares). And he who thinks on Himachal shall have pardon from all sins. And all things that die on Himachal, and all things that in dying think of his snows, are freed from sin. As the dew is dried by the morning sun so are the sins of man by the sight of Himachal. In a thousand ages of the Gods I could not tell thee of the glories of Himachal where Shiva lived, and where the Ganges falls from the throne of Vishnu like the slender thread of a lotus flower."

MARIAM. By Ennio Flaiano. Translated from the Italian by Stuart Hood.

John Lehmann. 9s. 6d.

*Mariam* is a first novel by the Italian journalist, Ennio Flaiano. His war experiences in Abyssinia provide the background for the adventures of an Italian officer who, through a series of minor mishaps and miseries, boredom and nostalgia, is led to commit a brutal murder. Later he believes he has contracted leprosy from his victim, a native woman with whom he has had a casual affair. Desperate, and in an effort to return to his wife in Italy, he commits another murder.

The blazing days, natives alien and quiescent, a country that eludes him even while it hurts his senses, the agonies and propitiations of an outcast, and the final tracing of cause and effect that shifts the emphasis to mere surface guilt—indeed, attenuates it to a minor thread in the complex web of human relationships: all this makes a book not easy to forget. But one must first come to terms with a theme of nearly irremediable ugliness. It would need much more than the philosophic gloss of the last chapters to excuse their cynicism, or to give to the concluding queasy tremors the dignity of contrition. The whole smart and shame is lopped back to a neat little scheme of justification by experience—which weakens what is otherwise a powerfully conceived novel. Or perhaps more exactly, the weakness lies in the reader's uncertainty as to how far this 'human game of probability' is also a conscious delineation of what is numb and rotting in a man's mind. One must add, however, in fairness to the author that dabbling sin with cotton-wool is a contemporary literary treatment.

STORIES FROM HOLY WRIT. By Helen Waddell. Constable. 8s. 6d.

Miss Waddell explains that these stories from the Old and New Testaments were first written for a children's missionary magazine or told to young relatives. The unhappy little story in her introduction about a despairing lost dog and her ineffectual concern for it is more likely to distress children devoted to animals than to persuade them that "God cares, cares what becomes of you, and cares terribly—far, far more than you would care for a little hungry dog." Others, of course, will not question that curious bland assumption of so many religious people that humanity's ultimate fate is ample pre-occupation for their Creator. The stories themselves, however, are presented simply and vividly, and with that lightness of touch and personal delight in the telling to which the young quickly respond.

AN ENGLISH FARMHOUSE AND ITS NEIGHBOURHOOD. By Geoffrey Grigson.

London: Max Parrish. 21s. net.

In the fine style of an accomplished descriptive writer, the author reconstructs the material and social story of an old English farmhouse and its standing which gradually and irretrievably have fallen to sad decay: in lichen-covered stone, in pitted, valleyed and moss-grown thatch and in gnarled timber-beams, he sees the beauty which so often accompanies delapidation. Yet, the work is, too, a story of tradition and evolution; for, this seventeenth century farmhouse was, and despite its ruin still is, a connecting phase in pastoral and agrarian life, from the "wattle and daub" villages of the original Saxon tillers of that little stretch of countryside to the triumph of the concrete block and the corrugated-iron roof.



Mr. Grigson's masterly survey of the transition in agricultural life, and his speculations about the conditions which will be brought about by new methods and modern machinery, are localised at "Ashton Farm," but generally they might be applied to many a rural neighbourhood in England, or Ireland. The book is laudably free from technical jargon, and it will be delightful to everybody who has even the slightest interest in external nature. In describing the antiquities and the fauna and flora of seven miles of cornland, cowland and chalk-cliff, the author tells us how the farm "grew" before the era of "planning," and how from time to time it was extended and altered, to suit the needs of a long succession of holders, by local craftsmen who were not handicapped by dearth of native materials.

An old and mellowed farm and steading is admired usually from a distance, from where one gets the whole picture in its proper setting and against its natural background; but here we are shown beauty in the "close-up" pictures which, through the author's eye—and by the photographic lens—reveal a complete and continuous story. Thirty plates in four-colour photogravure are by Percy Hannell; these are superb enough to give to "An English Farm House" the distinction of an Art Book.

HANDBOOKS OF EUROPEAN NATIONAL DANCES. *Dances of Finland*. By Anni Collan and Yngvar Heikel. *Dances of Greece*. By Lady Crosfield. *Dances of Austria*. By Katharina Breuer. *Dances of Portugal*. By Lucile Armstrong. Published under the Auspices of the Royal Academy of Dancing, and the Ling Physical Education Association. Max Parrish. 3s. 6d. each.

These are the first four books in a series being published to meet the increasing interest in national folk dances. The specialists responsible for them have, despite the smallness of the volumes, given interesting accounts of ritual and recreational dances, the influence of tradition and climate, the songs and musical instruments that accompany the dances, the festivals and costumes. In each volume there are coloured plates of selected regional costumes, step notation and music (arranged by Dr. Ferdinand Rauter) for four dances, and a bibliography.

A comment by Mrs. Armstrong in 'Dances of Portugal' reveals the spirit in which the books are written: "After all, a ballet can spring out of one man's inspiration, but it takes centuries to make a folk dance."

CHILDREN BEFORE MY CAMERA. By Adolf Morath. George Newnes Limited. London. 30s. net.

Mr. Morath is an artist with an international reputation as a photographer and the volume under review is a representative collection of his work in the particularly interesting field of child photography. In the bulk of these studies his work has an engaging naturalness, eschewing altogether the stilted effects of studio work; though, from his technical comments one is made aware that this is the result of the most exacting technical calculation. Not least of his qualities, therefore, is the *ars celare artis*. The photographs are excellent whether they are character studies or deal with action, Mr. Morath does not do himself equal justice in his captions, some of which have the antiquated archness of the Victorian album: "Full of Mischief!"; "Without a care in the world!"

Both professional and amateur photographers will find a wealth of technical



information in the book. Each picture is accompanied by a diagram giving position of subject, camera and lighting; as well as information regarding type of lens, condition of lighting and exposure. Chapters on types of camera, on negative material, importance of background, the use of reflectors, enlarging and processing are full of valuable technical information.

ALL ABOUT H. HATTERR. By G. V. DESANI. 9s. 6d.

HALI: A PLAY. By G. V. Desani. 7s. 6d. The Saturn Press.

When Mr. Desani's book *All about H. Hatterr* first appeared in 1948 there were few adverse comments—and these generally in protest at the looseness of construction, the liberties taken with the English language. Critics agreed that it was a remarkable book and so determinedly labelled Mr. Desani that the unacquainted reader seemed faced with a veritable monster—a book compounded of the Old Testament, Rabelais, Shakespeare, Sterne, Mark Twain, James Joyce, Gertrude Stein, Proust, Kipling, Tagore, Runyon, Saroyan, even Danny Kaye; or, as one critic put it: "A literary hellzapoppin." Mr. Desani afterwards explained that Mr. Hatterr "is a portrait of man . . . He is the popular mind expressing itself: at its best, at its worst, now bawdy, then vulgar, but important: because he's *us*." And he comments rather wryly on the fact that his effort to reproduce the authentic tones of his hero's meditations should seem 'terribly funny.'

The satire could only have been written by an Anglo-Indian. It is, however, the accompaniment, gay and uncensorious; to listen to Mr. Hatterr, robust, innocent, insequent and kind, is to understand the seriousness of the theme: life is *contrast*. Mr. Hatterr is an acrobat in his way, skilful in his clowning; and when he stands back-stage to watch the audience bewildered at the intricate feats, the incredible, terrifying turns of Life, he applauds a supreme performer.

*Hali*, a poem that might be described as a tragic but spiritually triumphant journey through paradox, anguish, rebellion to complete renunciation has considerably impressed Mr. T. S. Eliot and Mr. E. M. Forster. Their Foreword suggests that they see in the poem something completely different from the novel and having "a private mythology." Yet it is possible to see in it the austere development of Mr. Hatterr's theme on a rarefied plane, and an embodiment of the immemorial teaching of the East as to the end of man.

STONE MAD. By Seamus Murphy. Golden Eagle Books Ltd. 12s. 6d.

The publishers of *Stone Mad* say that it "is sure to find a secure place among the best autobiographies of these times." As the book, save for a few pages, is not autobiographical, this seems odd praise. Mr. Murphy, in his preface, properly describes its purpose: "In what I have written I have tried to give an idea of what the lives of the 'stonies' are like at the present day—or rather, at the time I myself started to work. I have more or less let the men tell their own story. I have exaggerated nothing, not even their talk about stone. I would not have attempted it at all but that I know nobody else is likely to do it. Most of the men are old now, and apprentices are few, so the chances of its being recorded grow less every day." It is, in fact, an admirable description of a dying craft, stone cutting, with its materials, traditions, tools; and of the 'stonies' themselves with those characteristics of the craftsman: pride in the work, integrity

and independence. Mr. Murphy's narrative suffers a little from lack of plan; but the racy conversation of the men, their passionate interest in every aspect of their craft and their dread of machinery, concrete, and the future make an absorbing, if sorrowful, story. It is regrettable that the opportunity has been missed to include illustrations of their work from different parts of the country.

CHEKOV IN MY LIFE. A Love Story. By Lydia Avilov. John Lehmann. 10s. 6d.

After Chekov's death a fragment in his writing was found that might serve as postscript to Lydia Avilov's account of their love for each other. It is quoted in Mr. Gerhardt's study of Chekhov.

"But when one listens to music, all this is—that some people lie in their graves and sleep, and that one woman is alive and, grey-haired, is now sitting in a box in the theatre, seems quiet and majestic, and the avalanche (romantic love) no longer meaningless, since in nature everything has a meaning. And everything is forgiven, and it would be strange not to forgive."

Whether they refer to a Lydia Avilov he imagined grown old and surviving him, or whether they are only another of his intuitive syntheses of common experience, the lines echo the theme of this book: youthful gay love that smouldered and then burned up again in memory. If circumstances kept them apart—though her conventional hesitations would have yielded sooner than his dislike as an artist for irrevocable commitments—their suffering was no stranger to small subtle pleasures. And it probably gave to Chekhov's work much of its sombre gentleness, delicate acidity, the lengthening shadows of the futile and casual.

These memoirs appeared recently with the Moscow publication of various personal reminiscences of Chekhov; and Mr. Magarshack in his very interesting Introduction writes of Lydia Avilov, the wife of a Petersburg official, and her circle—drawing attention to the biographical material she provides about *The Seagull*—and of Chekhov's reserved personality. *Chekhov in My Life* is so fine a piece of work that it makes one curious about her short stories. Through it there sounds the very voice of Olga Prozorov:

"The music is so gay, so joyful, and it seems as though a little more and we shall know what we are living for, why we are suffering. . . . If we only knew—if we only knew!"

THE NORWAYMAN. By Joseph O'Connor. Faber & Faber. 10s. 6d. net.

THE LOOT RUNNERS. By P. H. Newby. John Lehmann. 8s. 6d. net.

SNOW DOG. By Jim Elgard. John Lehmann. 7s. 6d. net.

Here are three novels which are recommended to all—old and young alike—who enjoy well-written, straightly-told stories which are not dulled by too much sophistication or psychological treatment.

The Norwayman who gives the title to Joseph O'Connor's book is Knut Ollsen, a castaway ship's-carpenter who is found adrift and succoured by Mike and Maura McGillicuddy, with whom he stays and works on the little island of Shark and to whom eventually he is able to make generous and practical recompense. Life on the island is hard but wholesome, the fishing and the farming and the building, and the bargaining and selling at the mainland town of Manister; and in the telling of it the author gives us a valid picture of life's affairs and ironies in any one of the numerous separate communities which are

found between Shannon and Fastnet. Although we seldom are taken very far afield or afloat, every day brings adventure to the sturdy and industrious inhabitants of Shark. This is a stirring and refreshing yarn, in which the characters are drawn so realistically that it is evident that the author had in mind the people amongst whom he has lived.

P. H. Newby's *The Loot Runners* is a swiftly-running story, related by one of the leading characters, Bill McQueen, the main themes of which are a treasure hunt and the subsequent thwarting of a gang of smugglers. The base of adventure is a remote Ross-Cromarty loch, from where the diesel yacht *Manitou* sails for an American port. There is plenty of action and incident, and gun-play in the grand style, on land and at sea, with an Egyptian Pasha as the most colourful of the participating characters.

There are very few animal stories which can hold our interest throughout the whole of a full-length book. *The Jungle Book* was one; and another was *Monarch, the Bear*, whose author now gives us *Snow Dog*, an exemplary piece of even construction and fine writing about nature in the raw and the wild, open spaces where the existence of the trapper and the hunter—personified here in Link Stevens—depends on the life of a dog. There is a rare reality in this graphic story by Jim Elgard, a story of unrelenting battle for bare existence of man and dog and wolf, of the unrelenting elements and of the famine-winter, when hunger comes to man and beast alike.

THE BEAST MUST DIE. By Nicholas Blake. John Lehmann. 6/-

Mr. Blake has written a detective story whose clues are psychological and stated with enough subtlety for the reader to be kept in the desired condition of suspense till the last chapter. The first part of the book, in diary form, sets out the motives and plans of its writer in his determination to murder a man whose name is unknown to him and whom he has never seen. The second part describes how the plan fails; yet the intended victim is found murdered and the diarist, because of police suspicion, is obliged to seek the aid of a private investigator. The more sentimental reader will probably find that his sympathies are actively engaged on the side of the murderer. *The Beast Must Die* is an example of the crime novel at its best.

THE FIRE IN THE DUST. By Francis MacManus. Jonathan Cape. 9s. 6d. net.

Francis MacManus has given us here a very fine book. He conceals his considerable literary craftsmanship beneath a prose style so fluent and easy that the reader can give all his attention to the theme itself. The story is based on a close and accurate survey of Catholic Puritanism (Jansenism) in Irish provincial life. This tendency, which regards the God-given senses, colour, brightness, and gaiety, and, by extension "foreigners"—even "foreign languages,"—as in some indefinable way "sinful," is a very real issue to-day, and probably accounts for the popularity in this country of the work of M. Mauriac, who lends almost every human activity a sense of profound depravity.

Stephen and Maria Golden, the "foreign" children, have an aura of shamefulness about them: like canaries or budgerigars, they are doomed to be pecked to death by the sturdier native fauna. The colour-contrast, if I may so call it, is most skilfully presented by MacManus against the grave and mellow tones of an old Cathedral town. Golden *père* is not a sympathetic figure, which re-establishes our emotional equilibrium: otherwise, we might view our young Philistines



with too cold an eye. I found it hard to realise that Irish schoolboys, in their own fashion, can be every bit as repulsive as the British breed.

"The Fire in the Dust" is that rare thing in Irish literature, a *tour-de-force* of fair-mindedness, and MacManus takes us all the way with him. His instincts, his sympathies, for the purpose of the book, are with the Philistines; but his charity, his principles, are with the Goldens, and against that view of life I once heard summarised in a memorable phrase: "... the degrading passion of love."

CECIL FFRENCH SALKELD.

FRANK HARRIS. By Hugh Kingsmill. The Holiday Library. John Lehmann. 6s.

Mr. Kingsmill tells how Bernard Shaw once said of Harris: "He is neither first-rate, nor second-rate, nor tenth-rate. He is just his horrible unique self." Yet if one were to imagine a Baron Corvo turned rumbustious and brooding, not on the Renaissance, but on politics and commerce, there is a certain resemblance to be observed between two men who could be fitted into no scheme of morality or convention; who roused admiration, affection and pity as much as contempt and hatred; and who were swift to destroy their worldly success as well as the good that was in them. If Corvo's literary achievement was on a different level to that of Frank Harris, the one's devotion to the archaic and precious was equalled by the other's insatiable passion for the world of action. Mr. Kingsmill's book has wit, irony, imaginative sympathy and immense gusto; and those who like the picaresque on a grand scale will be grateful for this revised edition of his fine biography.

THE DARK PENINSULA. By Ernest Frost. John Lehmann. 9s. 6d.

The theme of Mr. Frost's first novel is stated in the words of Thompson, a poet, to the Florentine woman with whom he desires an affair.

"Our lives are dark peninsulas," he said. "They run into the sea of experience we try to relate, but fail. War occupies part of this peninsula, but it is the war of our desire, our petty power, our dislike for the stranger. We prey on each other, for the enemies are around us, working with us. But if we looked into our mirror perhaps our true enemy would be there. . . ."

The characters, some English soldiers stationed in a small Italian port during the Italian campaign, and the people with whom they are involved, are concerned almost exclusively with erotic emotions. The influence of a dead poet, 'A,' is the centripetal force: but beauty seen through a blur of spirituous mysticism or touched by neurotic blight is a difficult subject. One is now accustomed to that euphemistic introduction on the covers of novels: "The issues raised are serious ones, psychologically and morally . . ." but the common reader may feel on occasion that a little less pity for, or concentration on, flabby greeds would be tonic. Integrity is still important. Yet the theme of *The Dark Peninsula* has had very interesting treatment; and the book is sufficiently remarkable in style—save for spurts of self-consciousness—and in intention to deserve serious consideration.



THE WIND AND THE RAIN. Winter 1949-50. Vol. VI. Number 3. Quarterly. 2s.

This issue contains a translation of François Mauriac's "Fragments from an Occupational Journal," its melancholy, resigned sentences draped round his religious faith; and a consideration by Jacques Maritain of Thomism as "an existentialist intellectualism." It is argued that the virtues of the saints "are freer than those of a man merely virtuous"; and the wanton, cruel prudery of one saint, her allowing the murder of her brother, and another's abandonment of her children are cited as "an interior impulsion they receive from the Spirit of God in the depths of their incommunicable subjectivity, and which aspires, beyond the measure of reason, to a superior good seen by them alone, and to which existence they are called on to bear witness." The reader is offered the curious spectacle of Thomism corrupting the vision of the New Testament, and staging a Manichean drama played so that one cannot distinguish good from evil. Francis Berry writes on *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, and W. Gore Allen on Llewelyn Powys. There are also poems, excellent reviews, and a remarkable story by Kay Cicellis.

NINE. Number 2. Winter 1949-50. Quarterly. 2s.

*Nine*, which has an agreeable liveliness, precision and range, hopes to encourage a more extroverted writing, criticism concerned with form and pattern rather than with psychological probings into the critic or his victim, and poetry "that shows the poet responding to a living tradition of custom and sensibility, poetry in which feeling and thinking are not divorced either from each other (like romantic bewilderment and symbolist self-consciousness) or from everyday concerns." This number includes original poems and translations by George Barker, Iain Fletcher, Charles Madge, G. S. Fraser, George Santayana, and others; and some of the translations from Latin, Spanish, Chinese and German are accompanied by original texts. There are also various articles, a short story by Marco Ramperti, a study by Donald Bain of T. S. Eliot's *The Cocktail Party*, and book reviews.

INTERIM. Vol. 3. Number 4. 50 cents.

The American magazine, *Interim*, has a contempt for a false façade of democracy, for the hysterical hounds on the scent of un-American activities, that makes encouraging reading. There is an excellent essay by Thomas Howells on S. E. Hyman's *The Armed Vision*, sub-titled "A Study in the Methods of Modern Literary Criticism." It is obviously an important book, but the portrait of the ideal and ponderously equipped critic judging a single poem looks remarkably like an elephant ruminating for ever on the juices of one gnat. Mary E. Benton ably defends Laski's *The American Democracy*, claiming that he "has flushed a whole covey of frightened Neo-Babbitts." J. W. Morrison discusses modern Japanese fiction, and Granville Hicks contributes an article, "Political Interlude." There are also short stories, poems of varying merit, and reviews.

BOOKS ABROAD. An International Literary Quarterly. Winter 1950.

One could not hope for a more intelligently planned and discriminating literary survey than *Books Abroad*, with its list of recently published work in the main European languages and brief indication of their contents; and its

excellent reviews of selected books. This issue includes a perceptive study of Sigrid Undset by Richard Beck, tributes to Edmond Jaloux and Lucien Descaves, an essay on the Austrian poet, Anton Wildgans, by R. Breuer, and a Goethe symposium.

THE CORNISH REVIEW. Nos. 3 and 4. Autumn 1949 and Spring 1950. 2s. 6d.

*The Cornish Review*—if not all the contributors to Readers' Forum—avoids the unhappy comical aspect of those enthusiasts who bury their heads and hearts in the sands of racial and regional complacency; and concentrates on interpreting Cornish life and culture. Of particular interest in the Autumn number are Guido Morris's illustrated article, "My Work as a Printer," the essays by Mark Holloway and David Lewis on "D. H. Lawrence in Cornwall," and a study of Ben Nicholson by J. P. Hodin. The Spring number has articles on the resurrecting of the Cornish language, and archaeological finds. Francis Cargeeg describes his work with copper and study of the beautiful designs in Celtic metalwork. In both numbers there are, as usual, short stories, poems, regional articles, reviews, reproductions of paintings and drawings, and excellent photographs.

ADAM. International Review. A Literary Monthly in English and French. Nos. 197-198 and 199. August-September and October, 1949. 2s.

The August-September number is notable for its range. There is an essay on Balzac by Benedetto Croce that brilliantly refutes Brunetière's critical theories; an illuminating examination of Webster's plays by Wolf Mankowitz; an account of Saint-Exupéry's death; an appreciation of the Argentine poet, Ricardo Molinari, and a translation of one of his poems; a short story by Giani Stuparich; a section entitled "Venice and Trieste in Literature"; and three drawings by Chagall. The October number is devoted to Chopin and gives the English version of the twenty-five letters he wrote during his second visit to England. They are the sad and tormented outpourings of a dying man that yet give a vivid, and often mocking, description of the fashionable world of London and Edinburgh that so unwittingly stifled him with attentions. The last letter with its instructions about the preparation of his Paris flat has a faint note of hope: "Have a bunch of violets bought on Friday, so that the sitting-room may smell sweet. I want to meet with a little poetry on my return—passing through the sitting-room to the bedroom, where I shall doubtless be laid up for long. . . . Tell them to make fires, warm and dust the rooms—perhaps I shall still come to myself. Yours till death. Ch."

MEANJIN. Vol. 8. Nos. 2, 3 and 4. Quarterly. 3s.

*Meanjin* is primarily concerned with Australian literature, music and art, and the nature and variety of its contents make of it an admirable conspectus for the non-Australian reader. It also devotes space to excellent critical European studies. Number Two has essays on the Metaphysical Novel by C. I. Glicksberg and on Goethe by R. H. Samuel; Number Three, an essay on Pushkin by Nina Christesen; and Number Four, a perceptive study by R. T. Sussex of Georges Bernanos. Vance Palmer, in the same issue, writes with intimate knowledge of Will Dyson in Australia and England, and of his cartoons that excited the admiration of writers like Shaw, Chesterton, Wells and Bennett.

IN FACE OF FEAR. By Freda Troup. Faber. 12s. 6d.

Freda Troup's quiet and unemotional account of the Rev. Michael Scott's fantastic struggle against the exploitation and oppression of the coloured races in their own continent, Africa, rises at times, by the dignity of its presentation, by its freedom from hysteria and special pleading, to the level of an epic. Michael Scott, who began by participating in the Indian Passive Resistance Movement against the "Ghetto Act" passed by the South African Parliament in 1946, and went on to investigate the unfortunate Herero people, exiled and succoured by the Bamangwatos under their chief (Tschekeledi Khama) arrives at the point where, single-handed, he assails the United Nations at Lake Success as sole voice for millions of oppressed and dispossessed native Africans. This is, as yet, only the beginning of the story, I hope; but every Irish person will read this book with indignation, sympathy, and admiration for Mr. Scott. May his just cause prosper.

THIS HUMAN NATURE. By Charles Duff. Thinker's Library. 3s. 6d.

Mr. Charles Duff is a skilful and pleasant writer. I had hoped, being an admirer of his cheerful little "Handbook on Hanging," that we might go some of the way on "This Human Nature" together. But, alas, we parted company all too soon. Perhaps the simple faith of materialism is a precondition of being issued in the "Thinker's Library." But while Mr. Duff, on most subjects is amusing, his faith is a little too simple:

"... One may ask whether Christianity, which brought in its train a whole series of terrible wars, not to mention physical and mental torture, has really caused anything wonderful in the way of a change in our natures. Marxism may go deeper."

In what way "deeper," Mr. Duff? Physical and mental torture?

PSYCHOLOGY AND ART OF THE BLIND. By G. Revesz. Translated by Dr. H. A. Wolff. Longmans, Green & Co. 42s.

The main function of Dr. Revesz's work is to expound the full range of what to me, anyway, is a new branch of science—Haptics—the study of space psychology. Before going on to consider the problems of the blind, Dr. Revesz courageously analyses the whole philosophic basis of spatial perception pursued with such intensity from the time of the Eleatic School to the present day, and points out that even the most recent experimental psychologists and physiologists have had to come to terms with Kant's conceptions. He then enlarges on the relation between Haptics and Optics. In this section there are some fascinating quotations: a subject, born blind, exclaimed on handling a sculpture of an animal, which was most impressive from a *visual* point of view: "I cannot understand how the parts are connected to each other, everything runs apart." He was unable to visualise how the simple contours ran and how they formed one whole. Dr. Revesz has a large section on Aesthetics, and there are many illustrations the work of blind sculptors and wood-carvers, notably Gonnelli, an Italian of the 17th century, and Masuelli, a contemporary.

This is not an "easy" book; but then, it is not an easy subject, and we must be prepared for such phrases as "Optomorphic Forms," "Kinæsthetic Space" and "Stereoplastic Principles." To the non-scientific reader, the light it sheds on the mental and psychological processes of artistic creation alone, makes it well worth a little concentration.

RUSSIA. A SHORT HISTORY. By Helen Gay Pratt and Harriet L. Moore. Cassell. 12s. 6d.

One is tempted to say of Russian history, in so far as it exists at all, that it is an excellent example of: *plus ça change*. . . . Were things ever any different? The authors of this work cannot avoid the predicament of all writers on Russia—in a book of 215 pages, 2,000 years are dealt with in the first 50 pages; the remainder of the book is about the Russia we think we know. I feel they might have made more of the adoption, in the 10th century, by the pagan princes of Russia, of the Greek Orthodox religion. Ten men were sent forth, it is stated in Nestor's Chronicle (the Russian equivalent of our "Annals of the Four Masters") in order to examine the religions in each country, and to report back to their ruler, Vladimir. Of Constantinople they said:

"They took us where they worship their God, and we do not know whether we were in heaven or on earth, for there is not upon earth such sight or beauty. . . ."

And so the religion of Constantinople was chosen by Vladimir. I cannot help thinking that, instinctively, then, as now, the Russians felt that Rome would have brought them too far westwards. In 1797 there were, in Russia, nineteen and a half million serfs of the landlords, fourteen and a half million "state peasants," a total of thirty-four million slaves out of a population of thirty-six millions. There is a familiar ring about these figures . . . but, in 1797, it was called "The Golden Age of the Russian Nobility" . . . *plus ça change*. . . .

The book is well-written, well-documented and amply indexed.

HISTORY OF THE O'BRIENS. By Hon'ble Donough O'Brien. Batsford. 30s.

The Hon'ble Donough O'Brien's "History of the O'Briens" has so inherently interesting a theme—a family with its world-wide ramifications—that it would seem almost impossible to spoil it. Had it been possible, Mr. O'Brien would have succeeded; for there is such an infuriating agglomeration of trivial errors on almost every page, that reading the book is as maddening as trying to hear an exquisite piece of music being played across the street at traffic peak-hour. I was about to except the splendid reproductions of the family portraits, when I remember the finest—Mary MacMahon "known as Moira Ruhr" . . . "Ruhr" is either a distressed area in Germany, or a still more distressing physical complaint. There is hardly a name or address spelt correctly in the whole book; yet so enthralling is the historical matter that one wades in, ever deeper. There is material here for half-a-dozen superlative volumes—in the hands of several experts with a team of proof-readers.

THE GOTHICK NORTH. By Sacheverell Sitwell. John Lehmann. 12s. 6d.

No such literary malfeasances can ever be laid to the charge of any of the Sitwell family, and "The Gothick North" is pure Sitwell—only more so. "I cannot be writing poetry the whole time," says Mr. Sacheverell Sitwell, "and must look about for a subject for prose. Twice, before this, have I found myself in the same dilemma" . . . and, we feel sure, on each of these other occasions, Mr. Sitwell has turned his dilemma into a book—a successful book.



"The subject of this book," says Mr. Sitwell, who, like all good authors, writes our reviews for us, in a Preface, "the subject of this book has so vast a complexity that two principles have been easy to satisfy: that the things discussed should be non-Italian, and that they should be remote from ordinary experience and not too painfully present to the eyes. But this book, which does not pretend to be a treatise upon mediæval art, has at least other intentions than that it should merely extol the strange and the unfamiliar." Sitwell readers will find all that they are promised, enriched and enlivened by marvellously strange and curious pictures, tapestries, vignettes and divers other matters passing all belief.

SHAKESPEARE SURVEY No. 3. Edited by Allardyce Nicoll. Cambridge University Press. 12s. 6d.

This handsome volume, described as an Annual Survey of Shakespearian Study and Production, is sponsored by the Universities of Birmingham, Manchester, The Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, and the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust. There is an impressive Advisory Board, and among the distinguished names of the long Panel of Correspondents, Eire is represented by Micheal MacLiammoir. There are interesting critical essays: "The Structural Pattern of Shakespeare's Tragedies," by Marco Mincoff, the Bulgarian correspondent, on the 'meaning' of *Measure for Measure* by Clifford Leech, illustrations including a portrait of the Bard painted for John Dryden in 1693, and a permanent Setting for Henry VIII done by Tanya Mosevitch: International News, from Austria (Shakespeare in the villages); Bulgaria (Accent on the Comedies); Italy (Surrealistic 'Rosalinda'), Mexico, Poland, Norway. . . . It is well produced, beautifully printed, and just stops "this side idolatry". . . .

LEWIS CARROLL PHOTOGRAPHER. By Helmut Gernsheim. With 64 Plates in Photogravure. By Max Parrish. 17s. 6d.

Mr. Helmut Gernsheim in his fascinating and discriminating volume has presented a view of Lewis Carroll that, in some respects, will disconcert the lover of *Alice in Wonderland*.

The preface—which sketches the state of photography in England at the time—draws considerably upon Lewis Carroll's photographic diary and quotes some of his letters. The result is an entertaining picture of the Oxford don showing in all available moments a dignified devotion to the new art. He was no more ready to practise it on a camping holiday than to be a graceless beast of burden for its paraphernalia: everything was ordered and indexed and *comme il faut*. Yet it all must have seemed rather less decorous as he prodded his friends into providing his backgrounds, used them in his often devious plots to secure sitters, and exhibited—for so generally shy a man—the impervious blandishments of a showman when there was a hope of photographing royalty and the famous. Or he pursued them with an odd mixture of Victorian worldliness and the zest of a childish autograph-hunter. Mr. Gernsheim stresses the paradoxical man he was; but perhaps, to modern taste, the most curious aspect is, on the one hand, his enraptured attentions to small girls and his delicious cajoling letters, and, on the other, the comment he wrote to a friend. She was a social worker and, after a visit to see the girls in her charge, he enquired about a child of twelve:

" . . . I fear I must be content with her *name* only: the social gulf between us is probably too wide for it to be wise to make *friends*. Some of my little *actress*-friends are of a rather lower status than myself. But, below a certain line, it is hardly wise to let a girl have a 'gentleman' friend—even one of 62!"

The choice of photographs is admirable. When Lewis Carroll could subdue the conventional taste of the period—for composition pictures and fancy-dress—he was a brilliant photographer of children: revealing their charm and reticence with delicate sharp appreciation. Of great interest, too, are such fine studies as those of the Rossettis, Millais, his wife (Effie) and their children, Tennyson, Charlottle M. Yonge and her mother, Ellen Terry, and her sisters. Mr. Gernsheim has also provided comprehensive notes, and included Lewis Carroll's writing—in humorous vein—on photography.

INTRODUCTION TO MODERN ART. By E. H. Ramsden. Oxford University Press. 8s. 6d.

The second edition of Mr. Ramsden's book, first published in 1940, has its text slightly revised and several additions made to the collection of plates to "give a better balance to the work as a whole." It presents in broad outline the aims and achievements of modern art, explaining them as a logical development.

After a brief reference to the Impressionists with their devotion to light, the Neo-Impressionists with their technical experiments, and Les Fauves who sought not merely the lyrical responsiveness of the Impressionists but primitive awareness, he points out that modern art derived mainly from the Post-Impressionists, and especially Cézanne, whose work was given intellectual firmness by concern with formal values. But their successors would whittle away the flesh to the mental structure and the mind's more subtle pleasures. The chapter on Cubism quotes definitions of Gleizes and André Level (*e.g.*, 'reality is beyond and above all realism' and 'Cubism may be conceived as a fugue on a familiar theme') and discusses Picasso, and Braque with his genius "for transposing the objects of everyday life into patterns of unique formal beauty. . . ." Surrealism, if one reads André Breton, seems exciting as metaphysics—as when he writes of the mind talking "obstinately to us of a *future continent*" or "there is nothing I love so much as that which stretches away before me and *out of sight*"; but Mr. Ramsden's criticism is acute: "to the extent to which it stimulates inquiry into the contemporary relevance of certain accepted modes, it may be said to contribute something of positive worth to modern criticism, but on the whole it is more nearly representative of the scepticism and disillusionment of the age." He stresses, however the importance of Paul Klee's achievement. With the Constructive artist—who, it is emphasized, has Plato behind him—"modern art advances to a new position." The aim is to destroy the particular form inextricably caught in associations; and where the Surrealist seeks to unify interior and exterior reality, the Constructivist identifies form and content. Mr. Ramsden's argument is that "the construction of a rhythm of mutual relations, of mutual forms and free lines" demands an implicit meaning, an intensity and inevitability that are rarely attained. The validity of the finest abstract art is unquestioned; but some of its constructions compared with good mechanism lack the one thing needful—functional significance. The work

of Barbara Hepworth, Henry Moore, Ben Nicholson, Mondrian and Marcel Duchamp is lucidly discussed; as is our seeming approach to a period when the terms of art are convertible—with special reference to Kandinsky, who “establishes a close analogy between the arts of painting and music.” This admirable survey ends with a brief chapter on the relation of art to contemporary thought, and to science in particular.

L. H.

A VOICE THROUGH A CLOUD. By Denton Welch. John Lehman. 10s. 6d.

CHEERFUL WEATHER FOR THE WEDDING. By Julia Strachey. The Holiday Library. John Lehman. 6s.

THE QUIET LIGHT. By Louis de Wohl. Gollancz. 12s. 6d.

Denton Welch knew that *A Voice Through A Cloud* would be his last work, and, despite constant and terrible suffering, he continued to write till just before his death. His short stories and first novel were of distinguished quality; and this narrative, lightly disguised as fiction, is an even finer achievement. Out of the material of illness, frustration and the coarse, often indifferent or sadistic texture of hospital life, his delicate awareness of pattern and subtle lyrical gifts have made a luminous if sorrowful book. Only so articulate and mature an artist could have explored pain and fear as memorably and richly.

Miss Strachey's brief novel, first published in 1932, seems at first an inconsequent comedy of manners played on a narrow stage; but unhappiness flickers shadows over the characters. What had seemed no more than the delightful absurdities of a wedding party develops substance and astringency. The story concerns a girl on her wedding morning and a young man, both bewilderedly aware of the implacability with which their unquestioning friendship is being ripped out of their lives; and the very eligible bridegroom who, with studied correctness, deprives them of their last chance to know what they want. *Cheerful Weather for the Wedding* is an admirable little study of futility and misery, and of a group of people perceptive in their wedding finery as armadillos.

Mr. Louis de Wohl's novel has for main theme the life of St. Thomas Aquinas and the triumph of the mendicant orders in the thirteenth century, with, for contrast, the fantastic court and ruthless progress of the Emperor Frederick II, the sad dignity of Louis IX, the factions at the Sorbonne, and the Crusades. The story of the love of an English knight for a sister of St. Thomas, which forms the link between the different episodes, follows the conventions of mediæval literature. Less adroit are some of the expository passages, the author being in obvious doubt as to the reader's acquaintance with the religious and other disputes of the period. It is regrettable that no trouble was taken to correct several grammatical peculiarities; but as a popular presentation of St. Thomas's philosophy it is unlikely that the book could be bettered, and as an historical novel its colour, sweep and imaginative sympathy make it excellent of its genre.

CONSERVATISM REVISITED: THE REVOLT AGAINST REVOLT. By Peter Viereck. John Lehmann. 7s. 6d. net.

A characteristic of the literary intelligentsia to-day is its entire irresponsibility. This book, written with a kind of undergraduate cleverness, illustrates that theme. The author does not for a moment believe in the repression that characterised the Metternick era in Europe. He condemns the “Carlsbad Decrees for censoring German writing and teaching as a whole.” “Carlsbad,” he writes,



"was Metternick at his frequent unconservative worst, reactionary and anti-constitutional." Yet Metternick is hailed as the hero and as a model for modern political thought. Whenever this hero did something repressive it is explained away as been "unconservative."

While obstructing the growth of democratic and national freedom in Europe, Metternick talked vaguely and diplomatically about progress. On such a slender basis Professor Viereck claims that he was really on the progressive side. The Emperor Francis of Austria, we are told, crushed his Minister's reform projects but egged on his repressions. The Minister shrugged his shoulders and submitted. "Prince Metternick sometimes betrayed Professor Metternick." That may well be true. But there is no reason why Metternick's cynical blend of enlightened talk and repressive activity should form part of any second betrayal.

For those who prefer reaction, it is much better to have it without frills, as in this speech of Francis I to a group of professors in 1821. He said:—

"Keep yourselves to what is old, for that is good; if our ancestors have proved it to be good, why should we not do as they did? New ideas are now coming forward of which I do not nor ever shall approve. Mistrust those ideas and keep to the positive. I have no need of learned men. I want faithful subjects. Be such; that is your duty. . . ."

When this speech was made Metternick was his chief Minister. He remained so till 1835, when the Emperor died. And all the time he acted in the spirit of the above pronouncement. Castlereagh, when Metternick called his "*alter ego*," also had the diplomatic trick of talking smoothly. "We must try if we can," he declared at the Congress of Vienna, "to bring back the world to peaceful habits." But it will take more than such phrases to rehabilitate Castlereagh—or Metternick either.

The argument in this book is that those who want to change the world—to right social or national wrongs—frequently go too far or too fast. They tend to be violent or despotic. In these times it is better to get behind the Metternicks, who will talk soothingly but will use all their force to keep things as they are. It is a point of view.

R. M. F.

A SEASON IN HELL. By Arthur Rimbaud. The original text, together with a new translation by Norman Cameron, and eight lithographs by Keith Vaughan. John Lehmann. 15s.

*Une Saison en Enfer* was the last thing that Rimbaud wrote before abandoning the poet's trade for gun-running in Abyssinia, and may be regarded as a kind of spiritual testament of this astonishing genius . . . for, strange to say, in spite of his youth, his genius does not seem to have ever been in question. John Lehmann has done us proud with this elegant volume; those, who like myself may not care for the translation, have nothing to complain of, for Rimbaud's blazing, luminous French is on the opposite page. Keith Vaughan supplies eight suitably 'decadent' lithographs in a style which was modern in 1920, and which has become 'modern' again to-day. An attractively presented volume.

A GENTLE CREATURE AND OTHER STORIES. Translated with an introduction by David Magarshack. John Lehmann. 8s. 6d.

It is a brave man, who, in the field of Russian Letters, ventures in where Constance Garnett has gone before. Some day, perhaps, there may be better



translations than hers; but that day has not come yet. There must be millions of people to-day who owe their whole knowledge and appreciation of the complete works of Tolstoi, Dostoevsky (13 vols.), Turgenev (15 vols.), Tchekhov (17 vols.), and many other writers, to this one indefatigable woman. Is it any wonder if we survey her domain with jealous eye? Mr. Magarshack gives us here seven of Dostoevsky's short stories, including "White Nights," "The Honest Thief" and "The Dream of a Ridiculous Man." But, somehow, "Memoir From a Dark Cellar" failed to move me as did "Notes From Underground." Students, however, will, I am sure, welcome this new version.

ADVENTURE IN VISION. By John Swift. The First 25 Years of Television. John Lehmann. 15s.

It was in April, 1925, that John Logie Baird gave his first public demonstration of television. And, certainly, the adventures, setbacks, and astonishing progress of this new medium in the intervening years make fascinating reading. Mr. John Swift, who is well known to millions of readers of the *Radio Times* as "The Scanner," has given us here an absorbing account of the vicissitudes of the pioneers. Most interesting, I found a letter to the scientific journal, *Nature*, by a British scientist, A. A. Campbell Swinton, in June, 1908, in which he states, *inter alia*: "DISTANT ELECTRIC VISION . . . this part of the problem . . . can probably be solved by the employment of two beams of Kathode rays (one at the transmitting and one at the receiving station) synchronously deflected by the varying fields of two electro-magnets . . . so that the two beams are caused to sweep synchronously over the whole of the required surfaces within the one-tenth of a second necessary to take advantage of visual persistence. . . ." Asked to amplify this suggestion some years later, Campbell Swinton said in 1911: "It is an idea only, and the apparatus has never been constructed . . . it is, indeed, only an effort of my imagination." It was an exact description of the system in use to-day. An excellent book, beautifully produced.

COLLECTED IMPRESSIONS. By Elizabeth Bowen. Longmans. 15s.

A decisive factor in Miss Bowen's distinction as a writer is her detachment; detachment is popularly supposed to be an essential qualification of a critic. In my opinion, however, it is precisely the qualities that lend extraordinary perfection to Miss Bowen's purely creative work, that invalidate her as a critic. Indeed, in her Foreword, Miss Bowen completely disarms me by saying: ". . . I have written best . . . because most happily, about books whose claim was their subject rather than their style." That's just it! The average critic takes the author and his subjects and states, more or less skilfully, but seldom impartially, what kind of a job he thinks the author has made of his subject. But Miss Bowen goes right past the author and reviews the subject—the heart of the matter, as it were. *C'est magnifique . . . mais. . . ?*

ST. COLUMBA OF IONA. By Lucy Menzies. The Iona Community, Glasgow. 5s.

More is known about the life of St. Columba than about that of his contemporaries or predecessors—Adamnan's biography having been written within 100 years of his death. Miss Menzies' book is a revised and abridged version of her life of the saint, brought out in 1920. The subject is a delightful one, and the

author, in her very interesting Foreword and throughout the book, has much to tell us about what others have had to say about St. Columba and his Times. We have visions and prophecies, drama and poetry, in this story of a tempestuous saint of royal blood. To quote the author: "The story of his struggles with others, his conquest of himself, and finally his evening of serenity at Iona, forms one of the most moving pages of history."

THE SOLILOQUISTS AND OTHER POEMS. By J. W. R. Purser. The Fortune Press. 6s.

This book contains some thought and many words. Poetry has been said to be a sequence of sounds and silences. I find in this verse no poise—neither any music with poignant stress and holy pauses.

THE SURE THING. By Merle Miller. John Lehmann. 10s. 6d.

NOW EAST, NOW WEST. By Susan Ertz. The Holiday Library. John Lehmann. 6s.

Mr. Miller has explained: "I was in Washington that grim day in which Congress approved legislation allowing the Secretary of State to dismiss personnel 'in the interest of the United States'; it frightened me then, and still does. The next day I began making the first notes for what has become *The Sure Thing*." The hero, Brad Douglas, who holds a minor post in the State Department, arouses the suspicions of a Congressman from his own home town. His hatred of Fascism, concern for oppressed races, work for the underpaid, and a very temporary interest in Communism during his college days are all patiently—and with unnerving efficiency—examined by the F.B.I. until he is suddenly and unjustly trapped and ruined. The novel is enthralling as a portrayal of the power that self-interest, commonplace cowardice and dull-witted politicians have to destroy a just man's life; and Mr. Miller's indignation is admirably controlled. The construction is untidy; but if the sparsity of the political furniture is somewhat surprising, it is also a gratifying economy. The amorous scenes are embarrassingly moronic. Mr. Miller has enough promise as a novelist for one to hope he will outgrow the conditioning by advertisements that hampers not a few writers—at present his characters are largely presented in terms of tailors, toilet specialists, bar-tenders and the great undressed.

Comparison with the reprint of Miss Susan Ertz's *Now East, Now West* is interesting, for almost a quarter of a century lies between the writing. The characters in both novels have a similar background of wealth, education and European travel; but the dissimilarity could hardly be greater. Apart from the obvious differences in style, attitude and purpose, there is the enormous gap in depicted taste and sophistication—and both novelists convince one of their powers of observation. Miss Ertz, in her story of an American family's sojourn in London conveys with skill and subtlety the relationship between a business man and his socially ambitious wife, and the manner in which the realization of all her worldly aspirations brings to him maturity of mind, and to her bitterness and humiliation. It is taken for granted by people of their class—even for snobbish reasons—that a cultivated mind, intelligent conversation and fastidiousness are proper to human beings: the indiscriminate drinking, inane crudity of conversation and social behaviour recorded in many post-war novels would have seemed unsavoury in their servants.

THE CONCERTO. By John Culshaw. "The World of Music" Series. No. 10. Max Parrish. 7s. 6d.

*The Concerto*, like the previous volumes of this series, has an authoritative, agreeably written text and delightful illustrations. Mr. Culshaw traces the origins of the concerto to "one of the most dramatic of all musical forms—the operatic aria," and refers to the features the latter has in common with Bach's Brandenburg Concertos. The concerto's drama lies, he points out, in virtuosity and contrast; and its distinctive form developed when the function of instrumental groups was no longer confined to accompanying the voice. The differences between the concerto grosso and the solo concerto are examined, and the analyses of works by Mozart and Beethoven are admirable. Then follow chapters on the romantic concerto, national idioms in concert music, the various solo instruments (even to the Hollywood concerto for typewriter!) and on contemporary works.

Mr. Culshaw concludes: "The contrasts and conflicts between the individual and the mass are an eternal human problem in life and art; they are epitomised in the spirit of a concerto which, whether it be by Mozart or Walton, is fundamentally the same. The musical journey from Viadana to Bartók is as turbulent and divergent as the history of man through the same period, but whereas our personal experience of the latter is limited to the part of it through which we have lived, our opportunities to explore the former are unbounded." His book, though small, is a lucid, general explanation of the concerto's significance as a form for serious musical thought.

THE SHELTERING SKY. By Paul Bowles. John Lehmann. 10/6.

Mr. Bowles, according to the publisher's note, lives in Tangiers. It is easy to believe that the impact of his surroundings, a few speculations about some stray travellers and an absorbed reading of the existentialists are, in some measure, responsible for his appalling nightmare.

A young American couple of tepid affections and the friend who accompanies them on their travels in the Sahara—the three elaborately dissected—are joined by two Australians. Their journey is altogether lurid. The horror lies, however, not so much in the dirt, smells, disease, perversion, rape and lunacy that are gathered into the book; but in the fact that the distortions of fear, desire and fever, instead of affecting the outward appearance of things, nullify their significance. The young husband in his sickness, the wife with her terror of the unknown: both move through their separate landscapes deprived of the power to integrate experience.

If it is necessary to have panels and monthly or weekly labels for novels, would it not be wise for the adjudicators to reconsider their loudly expressed admiration for books that treat mainly of the sadistic, perverse and gross, and all with cynical disillusionment? Art of mean moral and spiritual stature rarely wears well.



I SAW IN MY DREAM. By Frank Sargeson. John Lehmann. 10/6.

The first part of this novel appeared some time ago in the *Penguin New Writing*. It is a study of youth; and the evasiveness, panics and curiosities of childhood and adolescence are carefully described. The shift of emphasis in the second part is perhaps an effort to indicate the change from the blatant self-absorption of the child to the camouflage of later years; but it gives a rather wavering form to the book. Mr. Sargeson employs too that irritating device of conveying the hero's thoughts, emotions and dreams in oddly punctuated and italicized passages—so reminiscent of the mouthed asides of an old-fashioned melodrama. The novel's merits lie in vigorous and alert descriptions of the New Zealand countryside and small-town life; and in adroit handling of relationships and situation.

THE FAR ASCENT. By V. N. Bhushan. Padma Publications, Ltd., Bombay.

Professor Bhushan devotes a substantial part of his book of poems *The Far Ascent* to appreciations of former work by, among others, John Drinkwater, Lawrence Housman, Phillip Guedalla, Edmund Blunden, Bonamy Dobrée and Somerset Maugham.

He aspires to the heights with a mild correctness of spirit, a trite though obviously sincere philosophy, a touching naivety of vision: but the *embonpoint* of the language (wizardries, beauty-glamorous eyes, marvel-wings, symbol-veil, dream-chime, silhouette-delight, eternity's inheritings, jewelled dreams, dulcet harmonies, diaphonous mist, rapture-power, endless horizonry, uncharted spheres, yawning chasms) makes one doubt the poet's staying power. Less ample poetic meals and abandonment of easy emotional gear are necessary for climbing the harsh summits of our post-war landscape. One must add, however, that famous writers seem to have found Professor Bhushan's other poems exotic, exquisitely musical, enchanting, original.

Perhaps one should quote:

" If only human beings  
keep their promise as does the Spring,  
Life would shine with the sun  
and sing with the stars!"  
" The dawn that reddens the East  
Is God's own beautiful blush—  
The dusk that darkens the West  
Is God's own inward hush!"

Professor Bhushan forces his way through amiable daisies.

THE PRIVATE LIFE OF HELEN OF TROY. By John Erskine. Allan Wingate. 8s. 6d.

From a long devotion to the legends about Helen, Mr. Erskine has written engagingly of the life he conceives her to have led when Menelaos brought her home after the sack of Troy. Wilfully and happily he has taken advantage of passages, incidents and hints from every known source; and always his choice has been dictated by love for the undimmed Helen. He even imagined her sojourning in an American university town, its inhabitants troubled when she had passed. So Helen in this book has been given a timeless setting; and her unperished physical loveliness is set off by a tolerance, a generosity and

a wisdom that noticeably civilize Menelaos, their priggish daughter, Hermione, and the scruple-loving Orestes. But Helen cannot escape her own tragedy—the fact that her beauty has set her apart from the common life she wanted to experience. She says sorrowfully to her attendant: “I wanted to know life down to the quick. Either it can’t be done, or I never found out how. With me, life refuses to be known. It sets me apart, it makes me feel like a special case. . .” This is a delightful and entertaining novel.

**THE SURVIVORS.** By John Sommerfield. John Lehmann. 8s. 6d.

‘The Survivors,’ a collection of finely written stories, is commendable for literary style, sincerity of depiction and frankness of dialogue. The themes are mainly episodic and psychological, based on the writer’s service in the R.A.F., of life in camps and quarters and casual places, in the air and on the sea, in many parts of the world. The work reveals a rare gift for reconciling varied characters gathered together from different spheres of civil life. Recommended by the Book Society.

**PEMBERLEY SHADES.** By D. A. Bonavia-Hunt. Allan Wingate. 9s. 6d.

Jane Austen, we may assume from her own conjectures as to the after-lives of her characters and her discussion of them with her family, would have considered amiably Miss Bonavia-Hunt’s ingenious conclusion to *Pride and Prejudice*. The novel describes the married life of Elizabeth and Darcy. Here are Jane and Bingley behaving much as one would expect; Mr. Collins pursuing his mammonish tactics; Mr. Bennet, drily indiscreet; Lady Catherine de Bourgh nearly suffering the irretrievable; Elizabeth now devoted to the conventions; and Darcy practising perfection.

Miss Bonavia-Hunt has pleasantly caught the accents of *Pride and Prejudice*. There is a play with social nuances in conversation and behaviour, an awareness of the charm of an ample and orthodox mode of existence, a grave stressing of the virtues of rank and wealth; but Jane Austen’s ‘economy’ in incident and range is lacking. The author has amused herself with patent cleverness—though with a curious disregard for the reader’s limited interest in imitation. But even if one could achieve something of that felicity of the ‘little bit of Ivory,’ it would still be necessary to cultivate a like independence.

**VERDICT IN DISPUTE.** By Edgar Lustgarten. Allan Wingate. 9s. 6d.

This book is absorbingly interesting in every way that such a book can be. It deals with the famous murder trials of Florence Maybrick; Steinie Morrison; Norman Thorne; Edith Thompson; William Herbert Wallace and Lizzie Borden. All but the last are British trials, and, without gilding the tiger lily of sensation, Mr. Lustgarten makes these cases intensely exciting. But he does more. He reminds us that a court of law is but an instrument of man’s evaluation, and as such, faulty. Edith Thompson was guiltless of murder; so probably was Mrs. Maybrick. As for Wallace, he should never have appeared in the dock, and certainly not before a prejudiced jury of puritans and sadists. When one of a married couple (living alone) is murdered, the survivor is apt to be ‘pulled in’ by the police. Motive: jealousy, if the partner was attractive; desire for another



mate, if partner is considered unattractive—nor does the existence of this 'other lover' have to be proved. As for the 'loose liver' tried by puritans for murder, apparently such juries decide that the miserable sinner is far better hanged anyway. One feels that a certain type of moralist will be forgiven his sins but never his virtues.

M. C.

TIMELESS. By Prince Nicholas Tchkotoua. Putman. 8s. 6d.

*Timeless* is a highly romantic tale set in Georgia, Paris and Switzerland. It opens in a novelettish manner with an old baroness receiving the confidence of her granddaughter about a love-affair. Then, after attending the funeral of her former lover, Prince d'Iberio, she reads the faded manuscript he has bequeathed to her. Its contents form the greater part of the book, and its theme, much stressed by an ancient monk, is that true love is divine and "possesses the measureless oneness which cannot be broken and held in private ownership." The book makes many large, if familiar, assertions:

"What he would never understand is that it is only possible to fight the element of time, the essence of materialism, with timeless, intangible weapons."

"God's things are eternal; only things of evil operate in time. That's why they are not really dangerous."

Whatever they may mean, the ideas are glib in their context. For example, while the Baroness and the Prince are understood to have enjoyed an intense communion of mind and spirit unaffected by physical separation, it is evidently for her information that his explanatory document has been written. Yet all this may appear captious where the author can rhapsodize: "the great city, with its blooming chestnut trees, smelled of violets—as Paris would smell as long as Paris lives"—a quite staggering euphemism! *Timeless* has the approval of the largest Roman Catholic book club in the United States.

KING CUCKOO. By D. H. Chapman. Illustrated by Violet M. Morgan. Pleiades Books, Limited. 8/6.

To choose books for children is always hazardous: their tastes are often unpredictable though good manners or resignation may hide their aversions or affections. *King Cuckoo* is the story of a cuckoo hatched in a kestrel's nest, and of his adventures in Africa, England and Scotland where he and his followers form a sort of King Arthur's Court. The descriptions of bird life are excellently done; but tacked on is a whimsical story with birds using expressions like: "*Quel happy rencontre!*" and "Then, ye gowk, why didna ye say, wi'oot a' the mees-tery?" Some children may enjoy the facetiousness; but it is possible that in seeking to please those young enough to believe in birds with headaches, and also those who are really interested in nature or sophisticated enough to appreciate the sly adult allusions, Mr. Chapman has attempted too difficult a task. For the actual study of bird-life and for the illustrations, however, there can only be unqualified praise.